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Mrs S Heslop  
Rectory Farm Primary School  
Olden Road  
Rectory Farm  
Northampton  
NN3 5DD

Dear Mrs Heslop

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Rectory Farm Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 15 May 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in January 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure the marking and feedback policy is used consistently in all classes
- ensure the school improvement plan addresses specifically the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report, with clear details on who will carry out monitoring of progress, and when they will do this.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with: you and the deputy headteacher; a representative of the local authority; the Chair of Governors and another governor who is chair of the quality and standards committee. I also met with the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher in their respective roles as literacy and numeracy coordinators, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan and a range of documentation including: the new behaviour policy; behaviour logs; examples of written comments made by pupils about the school and examples of curriculum materials you have newly introduced to the school. I toured the school with you and the deputy headteacher to observe the learning that was taking place. I held informal conversations with a few pupils about their work.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection there have been a number of staff changes. You took up your post as acting headteacher in February. A new teacher started in Year 1 at the start of this term. Your special educational needs co-ordinator is teaching Year 4 on two days a week. You have appointed four teaching assistants. You have also created, and filled, two new support staff roles to boost engagement with families.

## **Main findings**

Since taking up your post in February, you have formed a highly effective leadership team with the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher. You have rapidly put new systems in place to address decisively the priorities for improvement of the school.

You have recognised rightly the importance of tackling pupils' poor behaviour. You have established successfully a new behaviour policy to which staff, pupils and parents have responded very positively. This has contributed significantly to the creation of a new ethos for the school, characterised by calm and respectful behaviour. A key factor in this success is the consistency in the application of the behaviour policy. Pupils respond purposefully to their good behaviour being depicted on the pictures of the sun and a rainbow that are displayed in all classrooms. Pupils are enthusiastic about being awarded for good behaviour in assemblies, and the possibility of being named super learner of the week. You are aware that there are improvements to be made to support individual pupils to fully engage with their learning, but there has been an impressive shift in the atmosphere and learning environment that is appreciated by staff and pupils alike.

Pupils are focussed and engaged with their work. The senior leaders have given careful thought, and taken prompt action, to ensure the curriculum provides pupils with real-life experiences to stimulate their interest and creativity. Teachers ensure pupils have regular opportunities to complete extended writing. Pupils can

demonstrate and articulate clearly the ways in which their work has improved over the last few months. They are able to do this because of the helpful feedback they receive from their teachers, both orally and written in their books. I saw good practice today, especially with regard to pupils' corrections to punctuation and spelling. Pupils state how helpful they have found the sessions every morning when they practice their spelling. You acknowledge that the marking policy is not used consistently across all classes. Your next steps are to ensure all pupils routinely improve their own work, based on structured written feedback.

Pupils make excellent use of resource packs you have introduced to support their literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers are applying the teaching of mathematics to more practical scenarios and this is improving pupils' engagement and achievement in mathematics.

Senior leaders have a regular routine of learning walks and drop-ins, as well as carrying out formal observations of teaching. Your observations and feedback to teachers focus helpfully on key areas identified in the last inspection report, such as numeracy and questioning. Teachers have responded positively to your raised expectations so the quality of teaching in the school is improving. This is because you have provided all your staff with appropriate opportunities for training and professional development. You have promoted a collective drive for success so that colleagues are willing and able to share good practice. Your Early Years teacher provides weekly training for teaching assistants which has boosted their skills in supporting pupils' language development.

You have given careful consideration to staffing following some changes and have deployed staff effectively. You have appointed additional support staff to provide good quality in-class support and intervention groups. You hold regular meetings to review pupil's progress and identify those pupils who are underachieving. You ensure there are provision maps for every class so that all pupils have the support they need to help them catch up.

Your school improvement plan includes actions that address appropriately the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report. You acknowledge that direct reference is not made in the plan to the findings of the inspection. In addition, more precise details about who will be responsible for monitoring aspects of the plan, and when, do not currently reflect the good practice that is taking place. You understand the need to put this right immediately.

The governors demonstrate a high level of commitment and an accurate knowledge of the priorities for the school. They ensure they represent a wide range of expertise, through their professional backgrounds or training. This means they are able to ask appropriate questions and hold the senior leaders to account for the decisions they have made. They are highly supportive of you, especially in addressing financial constraints.

Governors contribute helpfully to monitoring, for example, in accompanying senior leaders on learning walks. They are writing their own action plan to reflect a structured programme of visits to the school and their monitoring activities. Governors have worked hard to ensure policies are up-to-date.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The school receives excellent support from the Northampton Primary Academy Trust. The trust has deployed you to the post of acting headteacher and provided valuable professional development opportunities for your staff. The local authority has provided essential support during a turbulent phase over the last year. The local authority is aware of the basis to financial constraints and recognise the need to resolve these as a matter of urgency to enable the current sense of stability to be sustained.

The governing body has received excellent support from the local authority's leadership and governance team.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Northamptonshire.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Carter-Fraser  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

- Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority