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Veronica Fenlon  
Headteacher  
St Mary and St John Junior and Infant School  
Beaufort Road  
Erdington  
Birmingham  
B23 7NB

Dear Miss Fenlon

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary and St John Junior and Infant School**

Following my visit to your school on 4 November 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 March 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 in order to become a good school.

#### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP). I considered a range of documents and visited lessons with you.

#### **Context**

The school has undergone a considerable period of staff turnover and absence since the last inspection.

#### **Main findings**

The prolonged staffing uncertainty has delayed the school's ability to improve quickly and rigorously. As a consequence, eight months after the last inspection, the school remains at a fundamental point in its improvement. Plans for the necessary

developments have been agreed. You appointed permanent staff from September and delegated leadership responsibilities to appropriate members of staff. These actions provide a suitable platform on which to build improvements. Leaders and staff are highly dependent upon external support and although short-term measures have been introduced, a longer-term vision for the school's future is not yet established.

Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are broadly average. Boys perform less well than girls and too few pupils achieve the higher levels by the end of each key stage. Just over half of the Reception children achieved a good level of development. This figure is an improvement on the previous year but remains well below the national average for 2014. The proportion of Year 1 pupils that met the expected standard in phonics, the sounds that letters represent, remained below the national average for the third year running. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do not make sufficient progress from their different starting points.

Phase leaders with additional subject responsibilities were appointed in September. They are at an early stage of development and require considerable support to develop their knowledge and expertise in order to bring about speedy improvement. Nevertheless, they are suitably ambitious and keen to make a difference. They understand that all staff are responsible for the rates of pupils' progress. They provide regular feedback for staff and quickly check that advice has been acted upon.

Your current plans for school improvement are relevant and clear but do not focus sufficiently on the expected, measurable outcomes for pupils. For example, you have not identified the need to improve the most-able pupils' rates of progress and raise standards accordingly. The plan is at an early stage of implementation and, as a consequence, current impact is limited. Pupils' mathematics books show little evidence of problem solving or the acquisition and application of mathematical skills.

A new system for early reading and writing was introduced in September and early signs of improvement are evident. Young pupils identify letter sounds accurately and use their knowledge to attempt unfamiliar words. All adults have adopted a systematic and rigorous approach to teaching early reading and teachers of older pupils adapt the skills accordingly. All classrooms display helpful reminders or ambitious words for pupils to adopt. Pupils understand how to check spelling and are growing more confident in their use of words.

In September you introduced a system to record and track teachers' assessments of pupils' progress. Staff received training in its use but they are at an early stage of implementation and their judgements are not yet accurate or consistent. There is no current method to check teachers' assessments before they record them. As a consequence, leaders and governors are not able to gain a correct account of pupils' progress.

The Chair of the Governing Body has a clear and accurate view of the school, its difficulties and the suitability of current plans to bring about improvements. She knows the school has been in difficulty for too long and is at an early stage of development. She is suitably knowledgeable and has the right experience to provide both expertise and challenge where needed. Governors are keen to keep up to date and be as involved as possible in the school's journey of improvement. The Chair of the Governing Body rightly expects the recently appointed phase and subject leaders to report regularly to governors so that their impact is tracked and measured.

### **External support**

The support provided by the consultant headteacher is highly valued by you, governors, staff and the representative of the Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP). She has been instrumental in identifying fundamental plans to bring about the necessary improvements. She has a clear and accurate view of the school's difficulties and potential. She is able to direct you, other leaders and staff to suitable high-quality training and necessary expertise. The BEP representative is keen to fulfil an effective and rigorous monitoring role. He has a clear understanding of the school's circumstances.

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

HMI recommends that urgent action is taken to:

- Ensure the accuracy of teachers' assessments
- Strengthen teachers' subject knowledge, particularly in mathematics and writing
- Ensure, track and measure pupils' rapid and sustained progress from their different starting points and intervene wherever necessary
- Challenge teaching where pupils' progress stalls or does not improve quickly enough
- Further strengthen phase and subject leaders' skills, to help them drive speedy and relentless improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Deana Holdaway

**Her Majesty's Inspector**