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26 January 2016

Ms Catherine Taylor  
Consultant Headteacher  
Kings Farm Primary School  
Cedar Avenue  
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Kent  
DA12 5JT

Dear Ms Taylor

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Kings Farm Primary School**

Following my visit with Tracy Good, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 21 and 22 January 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2014. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school:

- is taking effective action towards the removal of special measures
- may appoint three newly qualified teachers.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Kent.

Yours sincerely

Theresa Phillips  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2014

- Improve teaching by ensuring that:
  - teachers have high expectations of what pupils might achieve and set work that is consistently challenging, particularly for the most-able pupils
  - the marking of pupils' work offers specific guidance as to how pupils can improve their performance
  - pupils have the opportunity to respond to marking
  - teachers have the skills necessary to ensure a more systematic approach to the teaching of reading
  - the work of learning support staff is closely monitored and consistently effective.
  
- Improve pupils' achievement, by ensuring that:
  - children enter Year 1 with appropriate knowledge and skills so they are better prepared for learning in Key Stage 1
  - pupils make accelerated progress throughout Years 1 to 6 to enable them to catch up with their peers nationally
  - the progress of disadvantaged pupils is effectively supported and closely monitored
  - pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs receive effective support which is closely monitored and enables them to make accelerated progress in line with the others.
  
- Improve leadership, management and governance by ensuring that:
  - sustained action is taken to enhance senior leaders' and governors' capacity to drive improvement
  - the knowledge, skills and effectiveness of middle leaders, including the leadership of provision for pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs, are developed
  - the school is better-placed to implement the new curriculum and new assessment systems
  - procedures are in place to enable school leaders to monitor and evaluate the impact of those funds specifically designated for the support of disadvantaged pupils.
  
- Improve Early Years Foundation Stage provision by:
  - improving the opportunities for children to develop their basic skills in reading, writing and number
  - ensuring that all activities are purposeful and provide greater challenge, especially for the more able
  - ensuring all staff have a thorough understanding of Early Years Foundation Stage practice
  - implementing more effective assessment procedures so that staff have an accurate view of children's knowledge and skills

- increasing opportunities for parents and carers to be involved in, and knowledgeable about, their children’s learning
- improving the leadership of Early Years Foundation Stage provision.

An external review of the school’s use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 21 and 22 January 2016**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, the consultant headteacher and other leaders with significant responsibilities. The lead inspector also met with a group of parents, the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority. Teaching and learning in 14 lessons was observed, eight jointly with senior staff. The inspectors also attended assembly, met pupils and looked at pupils' workbooks.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection, one teacher left the school and a new teacher and an associate leader have been appointed.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

The accuracy of assessment of pupils' work has improved. Moderation of work with school leaders from Ifield School and local authority advisers has strengthened the reliability of performance information gathered about pupils. Inspectors agreed with the assessment of work by teachers and leaders in the school. Secure baseline information has now been published for pupils and groups of pupils, which is helping to identify those who are falling behind. A range of extra classes, including Saturday school, are in place to help them catch up.

Targets have now been set for all pupils. As acknowledged by school leaders, the inaccuracy of past assessments and weaknesses in teaching mean that the baselines for setting pupils' targets have been too low. School leaders and teachers have, therefore, used a range of performance information, including current progress data, to set new targets for individual pupils. These still need further work as they show inconsistent expectations between year groups and some lack of ambition, particularly for younger year groups in Key Stage 2. However, there are now milestones to measure the impact of teaching and other interventions. School leaders are aware of the need to adjust targets upwards as pupils' progress becomes more secure.

The rates of progress made by pupils across the school are generally increasing, although there are variations between year groups and between classes within year groups.

In the Nursery, children are making rapid progress, particularly in their physical development and their independence and self-care skills. In Reception class, progress is slower as children do not always choose activities which meet their

learning needs. However, this is beginning to be addressed. Their learning journals indicate that many more children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are on track to reach a good level of development.

In Year 1, the proportion of pupils on track to achieve the expected standard in the phonics (letters and the sounds they make) screening check is still well below the national average for Year 1 pupils. Some recent changes made to teaching in the year group show encouraging signs of improvement and pupils are already better at sounding out letters and words. Phonics training for teaching assistants is planned. In Year 2, some pupils who previously did not reach the expected standard in phonics have caught up and are now reading in line with expectations for their age. In Year 2, there is also clear evidence of rapid improvement in writing and pupils are on track to meet end of year targets which are much higher than the standards achieved in 2015.

Achievement across Key Stage 2 varies. In Year 6, about half of the pupils are making the rapid progress required to bring them up towards age-related expectations. Other pupils, although learning at a faster rate than last year, are still developing skills and knowledge well below those expected for their age. Pupils in Year 5 are progressing well, partly due to the high expectations of their teachers. Outcomes in Years 3 and 4 are inconsistent, although most pupils are making at least expected progress and in one Year 4 class almost all pupils are making good progress.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are generally making progress in line with other pupils in the school. Interventions which are intended to meet identified learning needs are having a positive impact. This includes targeted support by other agencies to address specific needs. Overall, however, there is limited systematic monitoring of the impact of actions taken. Similarly, although performance information about disadvantaged pupils is now gathered, there is no tracking of progress to evaluate the impact of actions designed to narrow the achievement gap between these and other pupils.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

The quality of teaching continues to improve, but is not consistently good enough in all classes. Teachers are regularly planning learning activities which build on pupils' different starting points. There are often different levels of tasks for pupils to complete and these are based on careful analysis of need. Where learning is most focused, teachers and teaching assistants circulate well, checking pupils' work and providing extra challenge and support where necessary. In most classes, frequent questioning by staff rapidly spots misconceptions and both teachers and teaching assistants skilfully help pupils correct their mistakes. Pupils are very keen to learn and are usually prepared to try and work problems out before asking for advice. They are becoming more independent learners. When they make mistakes, they will

try again and show satisfaction when they succeed, thus developing their stamina and resilience. Written feedback by teachers is consistently in line with school policy. Where advice is precise, pupils are using it to improve their work. Although the effectiveness of planning is improving, the level of challenge for the most able is not always high enough.

Throughout the school, pupils focus well on their learning because staff have high expectations of behaviour. No low-level disruption was observed. Occasionally, some pupils lose interest when work is not well matched to their needs. Generally, however, teachers plan lessons which are engaging and relevant to the pupils. Often these build on activities provided for pupils, such as a recent visit by Year 4 to the Sea Life Centre. The author Anne Fine had clearly inspired pupils of all ages when she visited the school. Pupils who met inspectors were fascinated by the way real experiences were woven into her stories and this had fired their imaginations. One Year 2 pupil said she was 'in love with reading'! This enthusiasm for learning pervades the school.

Beautifully presented displays around the school celebrate pupils' work and provide useful examples and prompts. There are fine examples of in-depth writing surrounding the bright and colourful peacock along the Key Stage 2 corridor. Similarly impressive work by younger pupils was displayed outside Key Stage 1 classes. These displays illustrate how members of the school community place a high value on excellent achievement. Year 6 pupils were proud to show inspectors the photographic display of their performance of Shakespeare's 'Midsummer Night's Dream'. This activity had clearly helped pupils gain ambition, confidence and self-belief and they are applying these newly found characteristics to their learning.

The Nursery provides a bright, well-ordered environment which enables children to progress quickly. Effective questioning by the teacher and teaching assistants promotes thinking and supports independence. In the Reception class, a wider range of strategies is now being used to develop reading, although this could be enhanced by more effective use of role play. Some opportunities are missed to extend and challenge children. The early years leader has clear plans to develop the strong focus on progress, evident in the Nursery, into the Reception class.

In Years 1–6, structured and purposeful lessons are allowing pupils to develop basic skills securely. However, opportunities for deeper thinking are limited, particularly in mathematics. Pupils are rarely required to apply their skills to solve problems or to demonstrate reasoning in mathematics. Greater stretch is evident in English as pupils are usually required to draft and redraft their work in order to improve its accuracy and structure.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Pupils benefit from strong relationships within the school; adults and children work together to create a harmonious community. A significant number of pupils are new to the school, and they are welcomed by all and settle quickly. Parents who spoke or wrote to inspectors are very supportive of the school and recognise significant improvements in behaviour and teaching. They reported that their children are very happy to come to school.

Pupils show respect for each other. They listen carefully to each other's responses during lessons, often building on observations or suggestions made by other pupils. No low-level disruption was observed and pupils' conduct was good. They are polite and welcoming to visitors.

Attendance has significantly improved. The arrangements to reduce persistent absence, introduced during the autumn term, have had a positive impact.

## **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

The consultant headteacher continues to show drive and ambition in relentless pursuit of improvement. She holds staff to account and tackles ineffective teaching, while maintaining positive relationships. Staff morale is high. The newly appointed associate leader has strengthened leadership, particularly regarding the tracking of pupils' progress. The leaders of early years and Key Stage 1 continue to develop their leadership skills and are driving improvements in teaching through modelling good practice, guidance and by having high expectations of their colleagues. As a result, children in early years and pupils in Year 2 in particular are learning well and many are making good progress.

The school benefits from the close relationship with Ifield School, as partners in the federation. Senior leaders from Ifield bring their expertise to moderate pupils' work and support teachers and leaders to develop both their leadership and assessment skills. Training of staff, including the newly qualified teacher, is based on an accurate identification of their needs and includes effective coaching by Ifield staff and advisors from the local authority.

The executive headteacher, consultant headteacher and governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. They are very clear about further priorities for improvement. Governors bring much sharper analysis and rigour of challenge to school leaders than in the past. The Chair of the Governing Body shows insight, pragmatism and creativity when considering the future direction of the school.

Actions taken by governors and leaders during the autumn term are clearly showing positive impact. There is a consistently strong attitude to learning across the whole

school. Staff and pupils are keen to do well and expectations continue to rise. Further work is needed to evaluate the impact of actions taken on the progress of pupils. Performance information needs to be used in a more coherent way to determine how effective pupil premium funding is in helping disadvantaged pupils catch up rapidly. The lines of accountability are not clear and the roles and responsibilities of leaders within the school and federation need defining. Plans are in place for the appointment of a substantive headteacher, and the challenge for the school during the period of transition to the new leadership team will be how to sustain this rate of improvement.

### **External support**

The local authority's extension of the consultant headteacher's contract to the end of the academic year has provided continuity, giving the school time to embed initiatives and evaluate their impact. Continued support and guidance from local authority advisers has provided useful and effective professional development for teachers and school leaders. Advice to support pupils for whom English is an additional language has been particularly helpful: staff, pupils, and their parents have benefited from the adviser's work to create a sense of belonging for newly arrived pupils who speak little or no English. Advisory work is beginning to improve the teaching of phonics in the school.

Advisers have also regularly checked how well teachers and leaders are assessing pupils' work, including in the early years, which has enabled the school to be confident about pupils' starting points. The senior improvement adviser has offered robust challenge and timely advice to school leaders to support rapid improvement.