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Wendy Todd  
Interim Headteacher  
West Wycombe Combined School  
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Dear Ms Todd

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of West Wycombe Combined School**

Following my visit to your school on 27 to 28 June 2017, 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 that have been taken since the school's section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in January 2016.

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

### **Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.**

The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan are fit for purpose.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Buckinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Newberry  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in January 2016.**

- Improve the impact of leadership and management to ensure that:
  - school performance is kept under regular review and information used to inform school improvement plans
  - teachers receive timely feedback on how to improve their skills, including those who are newly qualified
  - parental engagement and satisfaction levels improve
  - sports funding is used to increase competitive opportunities for pupils and increase rates of participation
  - the use of additional funding, including that intended to support disadvantaged pupils, is used appropriately and gaps between these pupils' attainment and others nationally begin to close
  - the curriculum is covered in full in all age groups, and includes opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding
  - pupils who have special educational needs or disability receive appropriate support and make good progress
  - equality of opportunity exists throughout the school and all pupils have an equal chance of success
  - all groups of pupils attend school regularly.
- Improve the impact of governance to ensure that:
  - safeguarding procedures are urgently reviewed and policy and practice meet statutory requirements, including in the early years
  - staff receive appropriate training, including in 'Prevent', to protect pupils from the dangers of extremism and radicalisation
  - systems to keep teachers' performance and pay under review are implemented urgently
  - governors provide greater challenge to school leaders for school performance
  - governors receive appropriate training to develop their effectiveness.
- Improve pupils' behaviour and ensure that all incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in order to accelerate pupils' progress, including in early years, by ensuring that:
  - staff receive appropriate training, including in the teaching of phonics to develop their skills, receive regular reviews of their performance and are set appropriate targets

- teachers plan activities in lessons that cater well for all pupils of all abilities and are pitched to take account of pupils' needs, including for pupils who have special educational needs or disability and the most able
- pupils receive regular feedback so that their misconceptions are swiftly addressed, and the most able pupils are challenged and achieve higher standards in reading and writing.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

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.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 27 June 2017 to 28 June 2017**

### **Evidence**

Short visits were made to every classroom to look at learning. Some of these visits were made jointly with senior leaders. I scrutinised a wide range of pupils' work and had discussions with pupils in a prearranged meeting, in lessons and around the school. Meetings were held with the interim headteacher, leaders, teachers, the chair and some of the governors of the interim executive board (IEB). A wide range of documentary evidence, including safeguarding records, policies, strategic planning documents and analyses of pupils' achievements, were evaluated. I also scrutinised documents relating to behaviour, attendance, records of meetings of the IEB and visits from local authority advisers. I met with an education adviser from the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust (BLT) and held a telephone conversation with the manager of the local authority safeguarding team, both of whom have been supporting the school.

### **Context**

Significant changes have occurred which have impacted upon the leadership of the school. Following the section 5 inspection, the previous headteacher left the school and the governing body appointed the two assistant headteachers to temporarily jointly cover the headteacher role. After the external review of governance, the governing body was replaced by the IEB from September 2016. The chair of the IEB acted decisively to immediately appoint a new interim headteacher from September 2016. One of the two assistant headteachers left at Christmas 2016 and the other became the deputy headteacher. A new substantive headteacher has been appointed and will start at the school in September 2017.

There has been a period of significant staff turbulence and a total of 18 teachers have left the school since the inspection in January 2016. While the school is currently fully staffed, it is advertising for a replacement early years teacher to take up post in September. The Department for Education, senior leaders and the local authority have begun the detailed process of the school researching options with a view to joining a multi-academy trust, but no firm decisions have been made yet.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Following the inspection in January 2016, the local authority and leaders worked together to create an effective action plan and to communicate the school's priorities to both staff and parents. Although current leaders and governors of the IEB accept the previous inspection judgements, the significant changes in leadership initially caused many actions to be delayed. However, since September, the interim headteacher and governors have acted decisively. They rapidly implemented new systems and procedures and are able to demonstrate a clear trail of effective improvements. The school's action-planning documents ensure that leaders' roles are

defined clearly, and strategies to support rapid improvements are both realistic and ambitious. Staff morale is much improved and there is a shared sense of purpose and drive to improve standards. As a result of leaders' actions, the quality of teaching has improved. Consequently, outcomes are improving, particularly in early years and by the end of key stages 1 and 2. However, leaders are aware that there is much to do to address inconsistencies in teaching across the year groups.

Gaining advice from the local authority and with support from the IEB, leaders acted decisively to address the shortcomings in safeguarding processes identified at the last inspection. However, at the beginning of this inspection there were still several administrative errors in some safeguarding paperwork and filing. As a result of leaders' decisive and swift actions, administrative errors in policies were quickly rectified and filing systems much improved. There are now appropriate arrangements for safeguarding. Leaders liaise effectively with external agencies when there are any safeguarding concerns about pupils. Staff have received regular and appropriate training, enabling them to be confident in safeguarding matters. As a result, staff understand the school's policy and follow procedures well, ensuring a caring culture. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in the school and feel well looked after. Parents confirmed this view.

The school's action plan has proved effective. Working closely with advisers from BLT has helped the IEB and interim headteacher to prioritise and keep a check on the range of actions needed to improve leadership and management. Where necessary, the chair of governors and interim headteacher have acted decisively to address previous underperformance at leadership level.

Last summer the deputy headteacher worked tirelessly to lead the development of a new curriculum. Her well-researched planning and attention to detail have enabled the development of clear long-term curriculum plans mapping the development of key concepts and vocabulary across different subjects. From these and other plans staff are now supported with effective resources with which to develop their own lesson planning targeted at supporting the different groups of pupils in their class. All staff now have more opportunities to share ideas and learn from one another. Some limited opportunities for teachers to learn from effective practice in other schools have occurred but further opportunities would help teachers to research ideas about teaching different groups of pupils, particularly the most able.

Leaders are putting in place appropriate performance management arrangements to improve teaching. Suitable training has been offered to all teachers in assessment and feedback, and bespoke training has been offered to some teachers in mathematics and other areas. Through maintaining a clear focus on improving the skills of teachers' assessment, leaders now have a clear starting point against which they can evaluate the impact of their work at key points in the future.

Subject leaders are ambitious and share senior leaders' drive for school improvement. Their honest self-evaluation is leading to rapid improvements in the way they work together to improve and refine the new curriculum in English and

mathematics. They are clear about the standards that they are expected to meet. Where there is capacity and stability, there is evidence that pupils' engagement and learning in English and mathematics have improved by better and more consistent use of the school's marking and feedback system. Nevertheless, leaders' work to ensure that all pupils experience learning that is suited well to their individual needs is in the early stages of development. There is more work to do to ensure that improved teacher subject knowledge raises standards of learning in science and the wider curriculum.

Regular checks are made on the quality of teaching. As a result, outcomes have started to improve. This is particularly noticeable in Reception Year outcomes and the higher standards of English and mathematics achieved by pupils in Years 5 and 6. However, there is still more work to do to ensure consistent approaches to teaching reading, writing and mathematics across the school and to improve achievement in science and across the wider curriculum. While nearly all teachers demonstrate that they are managing pupils' behaviour in class well, there is still room for improvement in some classes.

Leaders completed a review of pupil premium spending and put in place outline plans to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Together, leaders and BLT advisers are starting work to ensure that disadvantaged pupils receive the effective additional support they need to make rapid progress. With the planned improved assessment systems leaders will be in a position to better evaluate the impact of this work next year. The interim headteacher has been very proactive in securing suitable additional support and help this year for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, priority needs to be given to improve the leadership of this aspect of the school's work. More needs to be done to ensure that the spending of funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used more effectively to meet their needs and ensure that these pupils make strong progress.

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

The quality of teaching was judged to be inadequate in the inspection in January 2016 but much has changed since then. Leaders judge that while some teaching is consistently good, much still requires improvement and a small minority remains inadequate. The strong partnership between the interim headteacher and deputy headteacher has significantly improved teaching this year. Leaders have established non-negotiable standards for learning and raised expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. They have inspired teachers and teaching assistants to begin raising the standard of teaching, learning and assessment across the school.

Leaders and governors have sourced suitable training and support for teachers, enabling them to plan lessons that better meet national curriculum expectations. However, while the quality of teaching is improving overall, too many lessons are based on the assumption that all pupils need the same tasks and learning. Leaders are aware that more needs to be done to ensure teaching meets the needs of all

pupils including the most able and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leaders use standardised tests to gather accurate information about pupils' attainment and their learning needs. Continued training is helping teachers to develop a more secure understanding of the English and mathematics national curriculum and age-related expectations for learning. Although standards are rising in these subjects, the inspection evidence matches leaders' evaluation that progress is inconsistent across the school. In addition, there is much work to do to improve some teachers' subject knowledge and planning in science and the wider curriculum so that teaching, learning and assessment can be similarly enhanced in these subject areas.

Teachers have started to improve the feedback that they provide to pupils. In the best examples, useful oral feedback during lessons helps pupils reflect successfully on what they are learning. Similar improvements are emerging in the written feedback that teachers provide to pupils about the work in their books, but there is much to do to ensure that this is consistently in place.

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

Pupils' behaviour has improved significantly. They are smart, polite and conduct themselves well. Pupils told me that they recognise that behaviour is better than it was, bullying is rare and they feel that staff care for them well. In assembly, they listened attentively and then the whole school confidently sang with gusto and a clear sense of pride.

Most pupils move calmly around the site. However, better use of adult supervision is needed at lunchtimes and breaktimes during busy changeover periods when the younger children are navigating the steep external staircases between classrooms. Despite a tightening-up on rules about pupils' behaviour, some low-level disruption remains in a minority of classes. This is particularly the case when learning activities are not well suited to pupils' needs. As a result, some pupils do not take enough care with the presentation of their work, which means that it is sometimes inaccurate, disorganised or incomplete. This occurs where teachers' challenge to learning and expectations of behaviour are too low.

Although overall attendance figures are slightly above national figures, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has not improved. Gaps are still very wide and the attendance of these groups is still significantly below the national average. Although monitoring attendance of individuals, leaders are not routinely monitoring the attendance of these groups. Consequently, leaders are not aware of the impact of their strategies for improving attendance. More work needs to be done in order to eliminate these gaps.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

The progress that pupils make is improving, but many pupils are still working below expected levels. School information and scrutiny of pupils' books indicate that children in Reception Year and pupils in Years 5 and 6 are making much stronger progress from their starting points than they have in the past. However, in other year groups staff are not yet well placed to provide sufficient challenge for different groups of pupils. Consequently, the most able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not yet making sufficient progress across the school.

Mathematics remains a whole-school priority, and I saw varied progress in this subject across the school. Where learning is more effective, pupils are engaged in multi-stage tasks and encouraged to reason and solve problems. However, in some lessons and books, the work set is not suitably challenging for all groups of pupils.

Attainment and progress in reading and writing are improving in most year groups. Training for teachers and teaching assistants has had a clear impact in raising the proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check. Pupils value recent improvements to the school library and enjoy participating in the reading programme. These important initiatives are helping pupils to value reading more and to show a greater interest in books. In Years 5 and 6 pupils are rightly proud of the progress that they have made in their English and mathematics books this year. However, leaders are aware that there is still a way to go to ensure similar progress is made in these core subjects in other year groups. They need to ensure that pupils catch up from previous underachievement. For example, some books in Year 2 demonstrated slow progress in handwriting, spelling and punctuation skills. In addition, the most able and the lower-attaining pupils make limited progress in mathematics in Years 3 and 4. This is because teachers are not always setting work that is suitably pitched to meeting pupils' needs.

Outcomes for children in Reception Year have improved this year. The proportion of them achieving a good level of development by the end of the year has improved and is in line with national figures. Stronger leadership has enabled a reorganisation of the learning space indoors. This has helped staff to improve learning activities, foster good relationships and ensure more effective ongoing assessment. Consequently, the progress children have made has improved. While the outdoor space has been improved, better use needs to be made of this area so that it offers more stimulating opportunities for children to engage in activities which develop their language and number skills.

## **External support**

The chair and governors of the IEB are dedicated and committed to the school. They have worked hard to support and challenge the school and ensure that standards have improved during a time of considerable staffing turbulence. The IEB has shown considerable resilience and tenacity to ensure that it finds a suitable sponsor for the

school. It is currently in detailed negotiations with its third multi-academy trust. Governors are highly experienced and have offered very effective challenge and support to leaders. However, they are frustrated by the time taken to secure a sponsor academy as this has limited their capacity to support teaching and learning over the last term.

Sensibly, governors have made good use of BLT school improvement consultants to help them check the impact school leaders' actions are having on school improvement. There is a shared vision and commitment to continuing improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over the next year.

Coaching, shared planning and some moderation of pupils' work with other providers have improved teachers' skills and the overall provision for pupils. Recent improved assessments have secured more accurate data relating to pupils' attainment in each year group. Leaders and BLT consultants are working together to ensure that this information will enable the school to develop accurate tracking systems next year so that leaders and governors can start to monitor pupils' progress more effectively.