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18 July 2016

Mr Eugene Symonds  
West Kidlington Primary and Nursery School  
Oxford Road  
Kidlington  
Oxfordshire  
OX5 1EA

Dear Mr Symonds

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of West Kidlington Primary and Nursery School**

Following my visit with Mr Mark Goode, Her Majesty's Inspector (designate), to your school on 29–30 June 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 that have been taken since the school's recent 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 December 2015.

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 is fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not 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 Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in December 2015.**

- Improve the quality of leadership, including governance, by ensuring:
  - all safeguarding arrangements are in line with the current guidance from the Secretary of State
  - all staff are suitably trained at the correct level to understand how to keep pupils safe, and their training is updated in a timely manner
  - all systems for checking the work of the school are robust and leaders and managers are held to account for the progress of all groups of pupils
  - all policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and thoroughly checked
  - the school's website meets requirements
  - governors take a full and effective role in challenging leaders to bring about rapid improvement.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - ensuring that pupils have more frequent opportunities to read aloud in school so that teachers are able to check how well they are progressing.
  - providing effective support for disadvantaged pupils to enable them to make good progress from their starting points
  - challenging the most-able pupils to enable them to make rapid progress and reach the levels of attainment of which they are capable
  - making sure all staff involved in the teaching of early reading have the skills and knowledge to help pupils to read well
  - providing a broad range of reading material for all pupils, and checking that pupils are reading books at a level matched to their ability so they enjoy reading.
  
- Ensure leaders and governors take an active role in reducing the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent by:
  - improving the school's procedures for checking attendance
  - analysing patterns of absence for individuals and groups of pupils
  - checking reasons for lateness and absence more thoroughly, and taking effective action to make sure pupils are in school and ready to learn.

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.

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

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 29 June 2016 to 30 June 2016**

### **Evidence**

During this monitoring inspection, 20 lessons or part lessons were observed, 10 of which were conducted jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors met with you, the deputy headteacher, other staff with significant responsibilities and class teachers. They also met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body and two representatives from the local authority, including the chair of the task group. Inspectors scrutinised school documents, including the school's own information on pupils' current progress, records relating to safeguarding, records of leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and local authority notes of visit. An inspector spoke to parents at the start of the school day. An inspector also heard four pupils read: two pupils from Year 1 and two from Year 6. The single central record was checked.

### **Context**

At the time of the last inspection, the chair of governors was absent. The chair of governors resigned in February 2016 and the vice-chair stepped up as a temporary measure. A new chair, a national leader of governance, brokered by the local authority, took up post in April 2016. During the spring term 2016, the governing body reconstituted and six governors stepped down, including the governor with responsibility for safeguarding.

The Department for Education issued an academy order in April 2016. On 1 September 2016, the school will become a sponsored academy as part of the White Horse Federation, a multi-academy trust. The headteacher will leave at the end of the summer term. The trust has appointed a new principal, who will take up post on 1 September 2016.

A teacher with responsibility for Year 1 is currently absent. A temporary teacher now teaches this class.

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

The safeguarding judgement at the previous inspection, in the words of the headteacher, 'gave the school a sharp jolt'. In taking stock, the headteacher has unified the team, buoyed morale and ensured that improving the school is everyone's top priority. Working diligently, governors, local authority officers and senior leaders have all reacted promptly, resolving to improve the school quickly. All have the full support of staff, who, brimming with enthusiasm, say 'the bar is

now raised higher'. Parents are confident the school is improving, particularly the arrangements for keeping their children safe.

The local authority's statement of action, which also doubles up as the school's improvement plan, sets a strong steer for improvement. Actions are appropriate and it is clear who will monitor improvements and how leaders will measure success. However, it does not specify when monitoring actions should take place. As a result, improvement activities are vulnerable to slippage. The plan would benefit from the addition of timescales to ensure that leaders maintain the pace of improvement they have set.

Rightly, leaders have prioritised strengthening the school's safeguarding procedures. Leaders have taken decisive action to address previous shortcomings. The school's safeguarding policy has been reviewed and now meets the requirements issued by the Secretary of State. The headteacher, reaffirming his commitment to pupils' welfare, has insisted that all staff refresh their skills and understanding. Consequently, all staff have retrained, regardless of previous experience. Several senior leaders have completed enhanced qualifications, including the headteacher. In addition, the headteacher has overhauled the school's record-keeping procedures. Staff now record a clear chronology of actions taken for pupils who, from time to time, require additional support. This is helpful as leaders have a more secure overview of the actions taken and the difference they make. Regular safeguarding discussions are routine and leaders repeatedly remind staff of their responsibility to keep pupils safe. As a result, all staff know the procedures to follow if a concern about a pupil were to arise. Parents, too, are positive about the changes, particularly at the beginning and end of the school day. For example, parents visiting the school's nursery now take a different route through school. Pupils are matched carefully to appropriate adults at the end of the day. Consequently, leaders are reassured that they know who is on site at any given time. Nevertheless, leaders recognise that there is still work to do to ensure that all safeguarding systems are equally rigorous. Work is under way to update other aspects such as those relating to matters including whistleblowing and the safe recruitment of new staff.

Leaders have wisely utilised external support and completed a thorough review of the school's website. The website is now compliant with government requirements. Leaders have updated a number of key policies, ensuring that the website contains more useful information. However, leaders are sometimes a little slow to update particular aspects of the website. Consequently, some information is outdated and does not fully reflect the work of the school. For example, the physical education (PE) coordinator has evaluated the positive impact additional funding is making to raising participation and attainment in PE. However, up until the inspection, this was unavailable to parents on the website.

Leaders have overhauled the school's systems for gathering pupil performance information. Information is gathered at regular checkpoints and leaders have a developing understanding of how well pupils are progressing. However, work to ensure that information is accurate is at an early stage.

The review of the school's use of the pupil premium has taken place. As a result, there is an increased focus on how well disadvantaged pupils are progressing. Leaders have introduced a host of interventions targeted to meet pupils' specific learning needs more effectively. For some pupils this has made a real difference and they are now making rapid progress. However, some interventions have been less effective. As a result, the gap in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is closing slowly in some year groups, but not all.

The review of governance, suggested at the last inspection, has been helpful. Governors have reorganised, slimming down their committee membership. Governors note that this has contributed well to ensuring that conversations are now more detailed and purposeful. In addition, the quality of governance has strengthened considerably because of the expertise and guidance of the local authority, in particular the chair. Governors are becoming more analytical, asking helpful questions of school leaders. However, work to ensure that all governors fully understand the school's performance information is at an early stage.

Governors, led ably by the chair, are preparing the school appropriately for becoming an academy from 1 September 2016. The completion of the consultation period has enabled parents to feel well informed about the imminent changes associated with becoming part of multi-academy trust. The sponsor, the White Horse Federation, has appointed a new principal promptly. The incoming principal has already met with the current headteacher and parents. Governors and local authority officers have all contributed well to setting a clear pathway for transition to academy status.

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

There are now clear expectations about the teaching of reading. Staff have received training on how to teach phonics (letters and the sounds that they make). This has made a real difference and pupils of all ages benefit from higher-quality reading and phonics lessons. Leaders have revitalised the school's reading materials, auditing library books and updating the school's stock appropriately. Pupils have written reviews of their favourite fiction and non-fiction books. Leaders have responded quickly, observing pupils' preferences and ensuring that new books hold appeal. Pupils, who read to inspectors, read confidently and with enjoyment. This is because their reading books are increasingly well matched to their capabilities. Pupils are developing their phonics skills well, decoding tricky words with growing self-assurance. As a result, pupils are securing their grasp of early reading skills

more quickly than in the past. However, unvalidated information shows it is too soon to see the impact of this on raising pupils' attainment in the Year 1 phonics check or the Year 2 recheck.

Teachers are receiving helpful support to improve their skills and expertise. For example, teachers in the early years have visited other schools to improve their understanding of child-initiated learning. As a result, teachers' planning has improved. Learning environments contain an appropriate range of activities for children to choose from, such as those designed to encourage the development of early writing skills. Children respond well to teachers' guidance and develop their skills well.

Leaders have reviewed the school's approach to marking and assessment. Teachers are clearer on what is expected. In early years and key stage 1, pupils receive helpful advice from their teachers. This has a marked impact on accelerating pupils' progress. For example, when pupils are successful, they are encouraged to reflect on their efforts and try something more challenging. Not all teachers are rising to the school's growing expectations. In key stage 2, teachers' feedback to pupils still varies considerably in quality.

Teachers are making greater use of pupil performance information. In discussion, they told inspectors that they feel greater ownership of this aspect now. Where teaching is stronger, teachers use this information to ensure that activities match pupils' differing needs well. For example, in a Year 1 mathematics lesson, pupils were able to solve problems because the teacher ensured that work was just at the right level for pupils at different stages. The most able pupils were challenged appropriately, applying their skills adeptly to solving word problems. However, teaching is still too variable, resulting in pupils not making enough progress, particularly in key stage 2.

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

At the time of the last inspection, attendance was in line with the national average. This is still the case. Determined to improve further, leaders have responded determinedly, reviewing processes and monitoring pupils' patterns of attendance more closely. The headteacher has reiterated to families his expectations that all pupils benefit from attending school regularly. In addition, a range of incentives motivates pupils well. Leaders have rejigged staff roles and a home school worker is now in place. This enables leaders to follow up on absence consistently. Parents have received helpful information, underlining leaders' belief that every school day counts. As a result, absence and particularly persistent absence is decreasing, including for disadvantaged pupils. However, the proportion of pupils with low attendance remains above that seen nationally and further improvement for some pupils is now required.

Pupils behave well, with many displaying high levels of courtesy. This is highly evident when pupils come across the headteacher around and about the school. Pupils hold the headteacher in high esteem and readily engage in friendly conversation given the chance. In classes, most pupils are attentive and listen carefully to their teachers. Occasionally, when teachers plan activities which are not well matched to pupils' capabilities or starting points, their attention wanes and their work rate dips.

Pupils are taking greater pride in their efforts, particularly in key stage 1. Pupils' presentation of work in key stage 2 is less well developed. Handwriting for some pupils is not yet fluent or of a high standard.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Standards in the early years are beginning to rise steadily. More children are on track to meet a good level of development at the end of the year, including those who are disadvantaged. In addition, the gap between boys' and girls' achievement is narrowing rapidly. This year, more children are ready to start Year 1 with the reading, writing and number skills expected for their age.

Pupils are making better progress in key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics and consequently, standards are rising. Teachers plan activities that cater for different abilities more carefully. Consequently, the needs of different groups, such as the disadvantaged pupils, are met increasingly well. In some year groups, the disadvantaged gap is beginning to close, but not in all. Teaching assistants play their part, questioning pupils appropriately, developing pupils' language skills effectively and moving their learning on. For example, in a small-group activity, Year 2 pupils were able to recall key aspects of a story. They were able to offer perceptive predictions and suggest how the author might develop the plot. They were keen to read on, using precise vocabulary to describe the tension created by a cliffhanger ending. Pupils benefit from the support they receive, making good progress and exuding high levels of enthusiasm in developing a secure love of reading.

In key stage 2, improvement to the quality of teaching is slower. Most pupils make expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics, but for some this is insufficient to make up lost ground. In some year groups, particularly in lower key stage 2, many pupils are still not achieving the standards expected for their age. This is because teachers' planning does not always account for pupils' starting points or capabilities precisely enough. In addition, teachers miss opportunities to question pupils and fully explore pupils' mastery of new concepts. When this is the case, pupils complete tasks methodically but repeat skills they have already mastered. This is particularly the case in mathematics. Equally, some activities do not provide enough challenge, especially for the most able pupils.

## **External support**

The local authority has responded promptly to the section 5 inspection findings. Officers quickly established a task group around the school. As a result, robust support for school leaders has ensured that the school is now set firmly on an upward trajectory. Officers check the work of leaders fastidiously, and are quick to offer support when required. For example, the local authority's designated officer (LADO) has checked the school's safeguarding procedures, verifying that previous deficiencies have been fully addressed. In addition, local authority officers have provided regular support to ensure that the quality of teaching improves. Officers provide extensive support and are contributing significantly to keeping the school's progress firmly on track.