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Carly Simmonds
Headteacher
Little Reddings Primary School
Harcourt Road
Bushey
Hertfordshire
WD23 3PR

Dear Mrs Simmonds

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Little Reddings Primary School

Following my visit to your academy on 9 March 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- accelerate improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that teaching and learning improves rapidly within a stimulating learning environment
- ensure that all adults who teach phonics receive the training they need to do this effectively

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and other leaders including those of provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage, mathematics and English. I visited classrooms with you in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. I met with three governors including interim governors from the St James Academy Trust. I also met

with a representative of the local authority, which provides some support for the academy.

Context

You are the headteacher with no deputy headteacher because she is on extended leave. The assistant headteacher is on sickness leave.

Since the last inspection, three teachers have left the academy: two have been replaced by temporary teachers and another has been replaced by two teachers sharing a Year 2 class. There are, therefore, four temporary teachers working in the academy on fixed term contracts until the end of the academic year.

A new assistant headteacher will be joining the academy in May 2015. The academy is currently in the process of recruiting a second deputy headteacher. The Chair of the Governing Body resigned in November 2014 and was replaced by an interim Chair. There are currently six vacancies for community governors.

The local authority provides improvement support. The deputy headteacher of Bushey Meads Secondary School, from the Academy Trust, provides training and support for two teachers, including one newly qualified teacher. The academy is beginning to work with a school acting that is acting as an education improvement partner, providing support for leaders of English and mathematics and assessment. A consultant has also recently begun working with the school to improve the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Main findings

High staff turnover and the absence of senior leaders present significant challenges to improvement. However, you have planned the necessary next steps to improve teaching, learning and leadership. You are supported by a range of improvement partners to help your efforts to improve teaching and leadership. The academy trust has taken responsibility for managing elements of finance, facilities and human resources to enable you to focus on improving outcomes for pupils.

Several leaders are new to their roles, including those responsible for mathematics and English. Despite the challenges the academy faces, progress is evident. Pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work have improved. The pupils now have more regular opportunities to write. The focused writing days each half term are exciting starting points for writing. On these days, pupils arrive surprised to see the academy decorated around themes such as *The Circus* and teachers in costumes. In one lesson, pupils explored computer simulations of an imaginary citadel as a starting point for writing. These activities are very helpful in encouraging writing, particularly for the boys. Displays in all classrooms aid pupils by making the process of writing clear to them. These developments are recent and although the writing in pupils' books has improved, the academy's data show that the writing attainment

and progress of pupils currently in Year 6 will be below that achieved by Year 6 pupils last year unless more is done to address gaps in their learning.

Pupils' behaviour has improved as they have become more engaged in lessons. Teachers' marking is now more helpful to pupils because staff follow the new policy and procedures. Pupils' targets in mathematics and writing help them to understand how to improve their work.

Early reading skills including learning the sounds letters make (phonics) are taught regularly now, starting in the Nursery. Teachers and other adults have received training to improve the teaching of phonics. However, the quality of this teaching is still inconsistent. Some adults require further training to teach phonics effectively.

The learning environment for pupils in the Reception classes has improved and is now better organised. More needs to be done, however, to provide stimulating learning opportunities across all areas of learning. The role-play area, for instance, is uninviting. Extensive works are about to begin to make the outside environment fit for purpose.

The governance of the academy has improved. The academy trust provides very helpful support to ensure that governance is effective. Interim governors from the academy trust act as good role models in asking challenging questions and monitoring the impact of the academy's actions. The work of the sub-committees is focused on checking the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils and this scrutiny is helping to promote improvements. The clerking of meetings has improved to ensure that there is an accurate record of meetings.

Your self-evaluation is detailed and accurate. Improvement plans address the areas identified at the previous inspection. However, targets to improve communication with parents are not ambitious enough and the plans are too short term. You and other leaders monitor teaching and learning regularly by observing lessons, checking pupils' books and tracking pupils' progress. This provides you with an accurate picture of teaching over time. Following the monitoring activities, teachers receive helpful feedback and precise targets for improvement. Subsequent monitoring takes place within three weeks to check that the targets for improvement have been addressed and met.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Hertfordshire and the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Winter
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- For academies [CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk]