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17 December 2013

Mrs Lesley Cook  
Headteacher  
Mountjoy School  
Tunnel Road  
Beaminster  
DT8 3HB

Dear Mrs Cook,

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Mountjoy School**

Following my visit to your school on Monday 16 December 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. 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 October 2013. 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 school should take further action to:

- increase the level of challenge and support from the governing body by;
  - ensuring that the school improvement plan includes details of specific monitoring actions
  - using information on pupils' progress to closely monitor the effectiveness of the school's actions.
  
- ensure that teachers regularly plan lessons that are precisely matched to the different needs of all pupils, especially more able pupils.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with senior leaders, the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school's action plan was evaluated. HMI conducted a learning walk with the deputy headteacher, reviewed the school's assessment data, met with subject leaders and completed a scrutiny of pupils' mathematics and English work.

## **Context**

Since the inspection the governing body has appointed an acting headteacher for three days a week. The roles and responsibilities of governors have been reviewed and a new chair and vice chair of governors appointed. A teaching assistant and two midday supervisors have joined the school staff since September 2013.

## **Main findings**

With senior leaders, the new acting headteacher has quickly brought a renewed sense of direction to the school. A more purposeful and decisive leadership has resulted in revised procedures that have a sharper focus on raising pupil's achievement. Senior leaders have quickly completed lesson observations and set annual performance targets for staff to increase pupils' progress. The deputy headteacher has completed a thorough analysis of pupils' achievement from their arrival at the school and identified those pupils making less than expected progress. Teachers have responded positively to the information provided and have begun to plan actions to improve rates of progress, especially the progress of more able pupils.

The school's improvement plan is well organised and focused on improving key areas identified at the previous inspection. The school's plan has been agreed with staff and governors so that all are clear about the actions that will be taken and the intended gains in pupils' achievement. Actions are evenly spread over the academic year, with clearly defined and milestones built in to regularly check progress. The plan does not yet include specific monitoring events by subject leaders and governors so that they are able to independently monitor the effectiveness of the school's actions.

Subject leaders for English and mathematics are taking a more active leadership role. With support from senior leaders, subject leaders have completed an analysis of the school's performance data. They have produced action plans to develop pupils' knowledge and skills and addresses weaknesses in their subjects. These include the introduction of additional English and mathematics sessions for small groups of pupils in January 2014. The English subject leader has already re-organised the school's reading resources and acted to ensure pupils read daily and access a wider range of reading books.

A scrutiny of pupils' work confirms that marking across the school does not regularly identify pupils' next steps to ensure they make more rapid progress. Pupils' work also highlights that on too many occasions pupils are set tasks that are vague and not closely matched to pupils' individual needs to ensure that they make consistently good or better progress.

The Governing Body has re-organised roles and responsibilities and appointed a new chair and vice chair of governors. Whilst governors have completed visits to observe the school's work at first hand, they are not yet providing high levels of challenge and support. This is because monitoring by governors is not yet closely aligned with the priorities contained in the school action plan. Improvements in the tracking of pupils' progress has begun to provide governors with a more accurate picture of variations across subjects and year groups. Governors have acted promptly to ensure that all outstanding policies have been updated. They have checked that senior leaders have improved performance management procedures.

### **External support**

The local authority has been quick to make arrangements to provide interim leadership and management for the school. An assistant headteacher from an effective special school within the local authority has taken up a temporary post for the duration of the academic year. Together with the partner school's executive headteacher, senior leaders have set a clear direction and are working closely to improve the school's performance. The local authority representative has maintained regular support that has helped the school to compile an action plan that addresses the key areas that require improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Lindfield  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**