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12 December 2012

Colin Turtle  
High Firs Primary School  
Court Crescent  
Swanley  
Kent  
BR8 8NR

Dear Mr Turtle

**Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to High Firs Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on Wednesday 12 December 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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 September 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

**Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, literacy and mathematics subject leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. The inspector also looked at local authority progress reports, Governing Body minutes, monitoring schedules and Key Stage 1 assessment information relating to phonics (letters and the sounds they make).

**Context**

There have been no changes in staffing since the section 5 inspection, which judged the school to require improvement.

## **Main findings**

The school had identified the weaknesses commented on by the recent inspection and already had an improvement plan designed to address them. The plan has been amended and sharpened. Governors have been involved in this process and a summary of the plan has been shared with parents and carers. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and challenge senior leaders, for example, to demonstrate the impact of spending decisions on pupils' achievement. Although the improvement plan is appropriately focused, and senior leaders have a clear understanding of what good progress will look like, it does not provide staff or governors with targets against which to measure success at various points throughout the year.

The inspection report commented on action the school was already taking to improve pupils' use and understanding of phonics. This has been consolidated and pupils' early reading skills are improving rapidly. A new mathematics leader has been appointed and has received training to enable them to carry out the role effectively. Whole staff training on mathematics has resulted in a change to lesson planning so that there is a stronger focus on pupils' learning needs. The link between the quality of teaching and the impact it has on pupils' achievement is being made more explicit and teachers are more accountable for the progress their pupils make.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- share clear, measurable targets for improvement, which involve all year groups, so that the impact of action taken can be evaluated more easily, and success celebrated, at several points during the year
- use the expertise of the external consultant to support the mathematics leader, develop leadership skills and raise the profile of mathematics throughout the school.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

## **External support**

The school is receptive to external support. The local authority provides consultant support and access to training. The authority continues to hold termly progress meetings to check that improvements are happening. In addition to the support provided by the local authority, the school commissions additional input from the local authority consultant. The consultant knows the school well and the school trusts and acts on her advice. This positive approach means that there is a professional partnership and the support is well matched to the school's most urgent needs, for example, by providing whole school mathematics training. The local

authority is promoting shared activities between groups of local schools and the school is a member of a local cluster and joint activities are planned.

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

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**