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28 January 2013

Pippa Brand-Benee  
Grendon Underwood Combined School  
Main Street  
Grendon Underwood  
Aylesbury  
Buckinghamshire  
HP18 0SP

Dear Mrs Brand-Benee

### **Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to Grendon Underwood Combined School**

Following my visit to your school on 28 January 2013, 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 October 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

#### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and assistant headteacher, five members of the governing body and two representatives of the local authority. In addition the lead inspector spoke to the Chair of the Governing Body by telephone. The school's action plan and the local authority's statement of action were evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed, including the new numeracy policy, recent monitoring of teaching, monitoring records by local authority advisers and examples of pupils' numeracy work.

#### **Context**

The new headteacher joined the school in January 2013 and the nursery opened at the start of this term.

## **Main findings**

The headteacher and her assistant headteacher are taking insightful decisions about how to address the areas for improvement identified during the recent section 5 inspection. The headteacher is increasing the frequency of monitoring of teaching and assessing pupils' progress through regular scrutiny of pupils' work. This is helping senior leaders, the governing body and local authority adviser decide how best to help teachers improve their practice. Leaders are setting ambitious targets for staff. New appraisal targets will hold teachers and teaching assistants to account for the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

The updated action plan is detailed and addresses the main priorities to help the school move forward. Targets are precise and indicate who has responsibility for leading each priority. The post-Ofsted action plan is supported by separate development policies and plans, such as the numeracy strategy. Developing better teaching of numeracy throughout the school is showing signs of improvement in pupils' numeracy work. All action plans have milestones and success criteria but these need to be more quantifiable so that senior leaders and governors can systematically judge progress of the school.

The governing body is getting to grips with the urgency of improvement needed and is fully supporting the headteacher's vision for raising expectations and aspirations of staff and pupils. The governing body is determined that under new leadership the school can quickly improve. Governors willingly take on responsibility for assessing developments in key areas, such as literacy and numeracy, helping senior leaders ensure that planned interventions are having the intended impact on pupils' progress.

Governors are currently auditing their training needs and working well with the local authority to select training courses to develop their confidence in checking the performance of the school. Governors are starting to develop the necessary skills for analysing achievement data and measuring how well the school performs against national expectations for pupils' progress. The governing body has not yet devised a targeted action plan to strengthen governance. Further work is needed to evaluate the impact of pupil premium funding.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take 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:

- set regular check points in the action plan to judge how quickly actions are improving pupils' progress and raising attainment
- use quantitative targets to help the governing body check the achievement of different pupil groups

- develop an action plan for the governing body so that governors can measure their impact in holding leaders to account for school improvement.

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

### **External support**

The local authority continues to provide effective support for the school. Local authority advisers regularly visit the school to support senior leaders. Guidance is well tailored to the urgent need to secure better planning and teaching of numeracy. Senior leaders and the school improvement adviser are auditing the quality of teaching to plan a programme of support to eradicate weak teaching and develop consistently good teaching. The local authority's statement of action has clear targets but some targets need tighter timescales and more detail about the intended impact on the achievement of different pupil groups.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanna Beckford-Hall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**