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25 January 2013

Mrs J Hodgson  
Headteacher  
Brandon Primary School  
Carr Avenue  
Brandon  
Durham  
County Durham  
DH7 8NL

Dear Mrs Hodgson

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

Following my visit to your school on 25 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 November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and four senior leaders including the subject leader for English. She also met with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. During the visit, the inspector evaluated the school's improvement plan, the local authority improvement plan and looked at documents relating to improvements to teaching and learning.

### **Context**

Since the inspection, a new deputy has taken up post, a senior leader and another teacher have returned from maternity leave and there are five new appointments to the governing body. Two teachers are about to go on maternity leave before the end of term and will be covered by existing staff.

## **Main findings**

The headteacher, who was new in post at the time of the inspection, has taken swift and decisive action to tackle the issues identified in the recent section 5 inspection. She has begun to tackle weaknesses in the teaching of phonics across the school by reorganising provision to better meet pupils' individual needs. Teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage have accessed relevant training, including visiting an Early Excellence Centre in Huddersfield, which has led to the reorganisation of provision for the youngest children. The new deputy headteacher is already having an impact alongside the headteacher in developing the skills of the senior and middle leaders through the implementation of a coaching and mentoring initiative to improve teaching and learning. Weaker teachers have been identified and action plans for improvement are in place. The action plan drawn up with the local authority to tackle the weaknesses identified in the inspection still lacks milestones and measurable targets for improvement. This makes it more difficult for the governing body to monitor the impact of these actions on raising pupils' achievement across the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

The governing body are committed to the school and the Chair and Vice Chair are experienced in holding senior leaders to account. However, there are five new members who have joined the governing body very recently. They need to settle in quickly and access training to enable them to play a full part in tackling the school's weaknesses and build upon the expertise that already exists.

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:

- seek the help of the local authority to identify an effective partner school where additional expertise and guidance can be obtained to support improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- revise the action plan to include specific, measurable milestones which can be used to accurately track pupils' progress
- ensure that new governors receive early access to training and mentoring, so they can play a full role in securing improvements.

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

## **External support**

The local authority has drawn up an effective action plan in collaboration with senior leaders which identifies a raft of support for the school. They are aware of the strengths in the leadership and management of the school and as such are working with senior leaders and governors to broker the support which is most effective in moving the school forward. The

headteacher has also identified support outside of the local authority which is helping to support middle leaders to develop the skills necessary to tackle the school's weakness.

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

Yours sincerely

Joy Frost  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority
- the academy chain where relevant
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- The lead inspector.