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23 April 2013

Mrs Kim Bennett  
Headteacher  
Diamond Hall Junior School  
Well Street  
Sunderland  
Tyne and Wear  
SR4 6JF

Dear Mrs Bennett

### **Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Diamond Hall Junior School, Sunderland**

Following my visit to your school on 22 April 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 February 2013.

#### **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, a group of pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I evaluated the school improvement plan and scrutinised a range of documents including minutes of governing body meetings, records of meetings held to discuss pupils' progress and the school's own records on checking the quality of teaching.

#### **Context**

Since the February 2013 inspection, one teacher has returned from absence and a teacher has been employed on a part-time basis as an assistant special educational needs coordinator. One parent governor has been appointed and a vacancy for a local authority representative on the governing body has been filled.

## **Main findings**

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are leading changes in the school with increasing rigour. They have revised the school improvement plan to include targets which ensure that progress can be measured more precisely. There are now clear expectations of what pupils should achieve in each year group, how teaching will improve and targets for increasing rates of attendance.

Leaders have introduced a more structured and rigorous programme to check and evaluate the work of the school, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching. This involves senior and middle leaders working together to share their findings and is enabling them to ensure a consistent approach to tackling any weaknesses. They meet teachers each half-term to hold them to account for the progress pupils are making. Leaders are evaluating the quality of teaching even more regularly and teachers are given specific targets to improve. These are followed up in the next lesson observation to ensure that improvements are being implemented and that teaching is having an impact on improving pupils' achievement.

Governors have a clearer understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school because they challenge leaders through a 'Standards' committee which meets on a regular basis. Individual governors are beginning to develop links with subject leaders. However, not all governors regularly visit classrooms to see for themselves how well pupils are learning.

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:

- ensure that the local authority creates more opportunities for staff to work with teachers in high performing local schools to enable staff to observe and share good practice to strengthen their understanding of what constitutes good and outstanding teaching
- ensure all governors gather first-hand evidence of the work of the school by observing for themselves how well pupils are learning.

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

## **External support**

The local authority has provided effective support through the work of the Support and Intervention Officer who has made three visits to the school since the inspection, for example, to assist with school improvement planning. Local authority consultants have given advice on specific teaching strategies to help disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language to enable these pupils to make similar progress to their peers.

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

Yours sincerely

Christine Inkster

**Her Majesty's Inspector**