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3 May 2013

Janis Waters  
Headteacher  
Great Leighs Primary School  
Aragon Road  
Great Leighs  
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Dear Mrs Waters

### **Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Great Leighs Primary School, Essex**

Following my visit to your school on 2 May 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 on 30 January 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

#### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, members of the governing body, and representatives of the local authority. Checks were made on the school's systems for monitoring the performance of pupils and staff. The school improvement plan was evaluated, taking into account amendments made following the last inspection. A brief tour of the school was made, accompanied by the headteacher.

#### **Context**

Since the inspection in January 2013, the school has reorganised morning classes in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Pupils from the mixed-age Reception/Year 1 class join with others of the same age. As a result, all 42 reception pupils are taught together using two class bases, supported by an additional learning

support assistant, who has an Early Years Degree. The Year 1 pupils from the mixed class join the Year 1 class, which is supported by additional learning support assistant. Pupils move back to their usual class teacher during the afternoons.

## **Main findings**

The school is now reaping the benefit of the leadership reorganisation that took place in September 2012. Several of the changes detailed below were made at that time but their full impact was not evident when the school was inspected in January 2013.

The school has a well-defined leadership team, with enhanced roles for the subject and phase leaders, including regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers have been given opportunities to observe each other's lessons and work together on lesson studies. This has promoted a good team spirit among the staff and a greater openness to ideas for improving teaching and learning. The school has been working hard with pupils to help them to become better learners, for example by raising their aspirations and setting higher targets. In addition, all staff are now involved in tracking pupils' progress and discussing ways to help pupils who need to catch up.

The school improvement plan has been modified to take account of the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2013. The plan shows how each aspect will be tackled through a sequence of activities over the coming year. The plan helpfully makes clear who is responsible for leading each aspect. The changes since January include:

- reorganising the Reception and Year 1 classes for the morning sessions to give equal opportunities among the younger pupils to work on the early learning goals
- using nationally available guidance on assessing pupils' progress to ensure that assessments are more accurate and that staff have a clear understanding of the expected progression in learning
- increasing the consistency of marking by ensuring that teachers follow the agreed marking policy and use the assessment guidance to pinpoint what pupils need to work on next to improve their work
- introducing a new approach to teaching writing
- planning mathematics lessons on the basis of what more pupils need to do to master a topic, rather than what comes next in the text book.

The governing body has become more effective in its role of holding senior leaders to account. Governors are less reliant on the headteacher's report for their information because they are making more visits to observe school life at first hand. Their ability to challenge senior staff has increased because they now receive more detailed information about pupils' progress.

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:

- ensure that lesson observations focus strongly on pupils' progress, checking that all make gains in knowledge, skills or understanding
- ensure that mathematics teaching develops pupils' conceptual understanding through well-chosen teaching approaches, careful selection of exercises and other tasks, and marking that diagnoses misconceptions
- provide more subject-specific detail in feedback to teachers, particularly in relation to the above aspects of mathematics
- ensure that the school's marking policy includes specific guidance on marking pupils' mathematics work
- enhance the improvement plan by including specific targets for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics for each year-group and for other key groups, such as pupils entitled to free school meals or disabled pupils and those with special educational needs
- break down the above targets to identify milestones for pupils' progress that can be checked after each half-termly assessment update.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection. The school has agreed to provide regular updates on pupils' progress.

### **External support**

The school is making good use of the external support provided by the local authority. This includes regular discussions with the headteacher, and consultant support for the mathematics coordinator. The school makes good use of a variety of links with other schools to share good practice. The school works with partners in the local cluster and beyond. One teacher is due to attend the improving teacher programme provided by an outstanding school in Braintree.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Abbott  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**