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1 May 2013

Dennis O'Sullivan  
Headteacher  
Coombe Road Primary School  
Coombe Road  
Brighton  
BN2 4ED

Dear Mr O'Sullivan

**Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Coombe Road Primary School, Brighton and Hove**

Following my visit to your school on 1 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 in January 2013.

**Evidence**

During the visit I met with you and your deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. I evaluated the school improvement plan and we spent some time discussing this and the actions taken to date. We walked around the school and paused in most classrooms to observe teaching and learning, I used this opportunity to talk with some pupils and look at work in their books.

**Context**

There have been no significant changes since the inspection in January.

**Main findings**

You have sharpened your monitoring of teaching. It is good that you are looking at different sources of evidence (work in pupils' books, pupil's progress data and observations of teaching). You are collecting evidence that is starting to give you a much clearer understanding of where individual teachers' strengths and weaknesses lie. Moving forward, you will find it useful to tailor your monitoring more for different subjects so you are able to get to grips with what is and isn't working, particularly in

mathematics. I hope you will be able to attend one of our national conferences for English and mathematics because it will provide you with an opportunity to consider best practice in these subjects.

We talked about the fact that mathematics is currently led by a team and this team is led by you. Your purpose for doing this is to make sure mathematics improves quickly. I am pleased that you are also using this arrangement to develop the leadership skills of those with the potential to take on the full leadership of mathematics in the future. It is important that you have a clear succession plan here because you will not have the time to lead the subject properly in the long term. I was impressed by your clarity of thought when talking about mathematics and we were able to talk in some detail about the need to provide opportunities for pupils to think harder in mathematics lessons. This is a weakness found nationally and, again, the above mentioned conference will give you the opportunity to explore ways to strengthen your practice in this regard. We both noticed in some lessons that work was not always hard enough for higher attaining pupils. I was interested to see that you have additional small groups for more able pupils in some year groups and that you are quick to point out to teachers that these are not a replacement for having pupils' needs met in class.

You are thinking carefully about how to organise the governors' work so their contribution becomes more purposeful. Governors have been developing their skills in looking at pupil data and they are asking questions about how they can best monitor the impact of, for example, pupil premium spending. This is helping them hold leaders to account more effectively.

Your actions plans identify the issues set out in the last inspection and they show how you expect these actions to lead to your school being judged as good in two years. I know that the governors have been asking for further clarity in the plan about how they measure impact of the actions taken at different points. It will be useful for you to identify milestones so that your governors can hold you to account at different points on the school's improvement journey.

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, I recommend that further action is taken to:

- identify milestones that will help staff and governors see that they are on the right track in meeting the objectives for 2015, as set out in the school development plan
- make sure that monitoring is focused on subject specific issues so that it informs school improvement and helps teachers become more effective teachers, particularly in mathematics.

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

## **External support**

The local authority provides additional support in line with its policy for supporting schools requiring improvement. As a result, a consultant visits the school regularly to challenge and support leaders in developing their systems for school improvement.

A consultant, who specialises in additional support for pupils with gaps in their mathematical knowledge, works regularly with the school. As a result, teaching assistants are developing their skills in supporting children and helping to close the gaps in attainment.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Sheridan  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter will be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority
- The lead inspector.