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3 May 2013

Robin Halls  
Headteacher  
Barming Primary School  
Belmont Close  
Maidstone  
ME16 9DY

Dear Mr Halls

**Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Barming Primary School, Kent**

Following my visit to your school on 3 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, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I evaluated the school improvement plans, conducted two learning walks and discussed the teaching and learning seen with you and your deputy headteacher.

**Context**

There have been no significant changes since the inspection in January 2013.

**Main findings**

You have made a strong start in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Your action plans pre-date the previous inspection and show that you have been focused on the right areas and that your actions are making a positive difference. During our learning walk, you and your deputy headteacher were able to show where you have improved practice and the things that you are doing to support and challenge teachers where teaching is not yet good enough. I was pleased to see that the newly qualified teachers in school are being well supported in the development of

their practice. I was also pleased to see that you were able to identify specific strengths and weaknesses in the practice that we observed.

The previous report shows that pupil premium is being spent effectively but the gap in attainment between pupils entitled to pupil premium and all others is still too wide. Pupils entitled to pupil premium funding in Year 6 last year were over a year behind other pupils. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check was much lower for pupils entitled to this funding than those that were not. There are similar gaps in Year 2 attainment data. This underperformance needs to be highlighted at every opportunity so all staff and governors are seeking to ensure these pupils make accelerated progress and that this gap closes.

We talked about ways of making sure children are supported effectively with early language development and number work and I am pleased to hear about how you are starting to do this. I am keen for you to explore ways to make sure that all pupils are taught these essential skills effectively in the Early Years and Year 1, so they do not fall behind in the first place. I look forward to seeing how your curriculum and the quality of direct teaching in the Early Years continue to develop.

You are effectively developing the skills of phase leaders in monitoring and supporting improvements in teaching. They can talk confidently about their phases and the strengths and weaknesses within them. Pupil progress meetings are more robust than they have been in the past, and the focus of these has rightly shifted from the additional help that pupils need to the ways that teachers can improve their teaching for these pupils.

Your governors are using their own professional expertise to support the school. They have been proactive in asking for pupil achievement data that shows how well different groups are performing. They know the school well and they are keen to see the school develop best practice in supporting all pupils to succeed. Their monitoring is closely aligned to the areas of improvement identified in the last inspection report. They can point to improvements the school has made and they are aware of the planned next steps.

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:

- ensure all staff and governors are focused on closing gaps in attainment between pupils entitled to pupils' premium funding and all others by raising the profile of the pupil premium, making reference to it regularly in your school improvement plan, talking about it regularly at governors meetings and making it a particular focus in pupil progress meetings

- develop the use of direct teaching through purposeful and enjoyable activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 to ensure that all pupils, with a particular focus on those eligible for the pupil premium, are in a good position to access the national curriculum and reach expected levels at the end of Key Stage 1.

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

### **External support**

The local authority has increased its support this year after rethinking its strategy to support schools. Since September, the school has been regularly visited by a local authority consultant who has helped leaders set up systems for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Consultants have worked with phase leaders in developing their skills monitoring teaching and holding members of staff to account.

The school is part of a consortium with seven schools and works particularly closely with two other schools from within this group. This arrangement is mutually beneficial and focuses on bringing teachers and leaders together to share common issues and expertise.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Sheridan  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**