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18 June 2013

Emma Longworth  
Southam Primary School  
St James Road  
Southam  
CV47 0QB

Dear Ms Longworth

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Southam Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 18 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 January 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, pupils, representatives of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school's improvement plans were evaluated. I visited lessons briefly with you and looked at pupils' books on a tour of the school. Documentation was scrutinised, including records of the outcomes of monitoring activities and of the work of the governing body.

### **Context**

Since the last inspection, two new parent governors and one community governor have been appointed. There have been no substantial changes in staff or leadership posts.

## **Main findings**

You have given the school clear direction in its focus on raising standards, and, together with your senior leadership team, have established high expectations for teaching quality. The school's rapid action plan (RAP) drives improvement strongly. It sits alongside the annual learning improvement plan, and focuses wholly on the implementation of actions required to address areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report. The RAP plan sets demanding targets for success, in terms of both pupils' achievement and teaching quality. Importantly, it sets out a mechanism for the termly evaluation of the success of the improvement strategies through termly meetings of senior leaders and governors. Evaluations are clearly recorded against each priority using data from regular monitoring of pupil progress and teaching quality.

The impact of these actions is already demonstrable. Pupils' books show a rich variety of writing for different purposes. Pupils are able to write at length and use an effective descriptive vocabulary. There has been a marked improvement in pupils' handwriting and standards of presentation as a result of at least weekly sessions for each class on developing this skill. Pupils continue to enjoy mathematics. The 'maths passport' addresses the improvements needed by individual pupils in basic mathematical skills, so that they have confidence to apply those skills in solving challenging problems.

Year 6 pupils are on course to demonstrate strong progress in their Year 6 national tests in English and mathematics. Those eligible for support from the pupil premium and those with special educational needs have closed the gaps in achievement which were a cause for concern at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2012. In Year 2, attainment across reading, writing and mathematics has improved in end-of-Key Stage 1 assessments. Attainment and progress remain more variable for groups of pupils in Years 4 and 5, though. Such differences in progress are linked to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching that pupils have experienced over time. Evidence from observations by leaders and external consultants indicate that teaching quality has improved markedly, and there is some excellent practice. There remain, however, some shortcomings in ensuring that all groups of pupils make good progress in all classes. Work is not consistently well-matched nor teachers' questioning adapted to the different abilities of pupils. Pupils' progress is well-supported by some excellent marking which links to clear targets, but pupils are not always systematically required to respond to teachers' marking.

Governors are highly committed to school improvement and very well-informed. They have been much involved in evaluating progress against the action plan targets, and in checking on the impact of actions through joint monitoring activities with senior leaders in classes.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that all groups of pupils make consistently good or better progress across all year groups, through consistently good or better teaching and through high quality support from learning assistants
- ensure that tasks and teachers' questioning are consistently well-matched to pupils' abilities
- give pupils' opportunities to reflect on and respond to teachers' marking and assessment of their work.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The local authority has provided school leaders with a very effective model and format with which to plan, monitor and evaluate their improvement actions. The local authority has, however, been slow to put in place the required level of coaching support for specific teachers. The attached local authority improvement officer visits monthly to monitor and discuss the school's improvement. The school has been adept in drawing on external consultancy for monitoring and developing aspects of teaching, learning and curriculum development. Links with the local secondary school have been effective, including in using the expertise of an advanced skills teacher for training teachers in aspects of teaching and learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**