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24 June 2013

Mr Lee Haynes  
Headteacher  
Acomb Primary School  
West Bank  
York  
North Yorkshire  
YO24 4ES

Dear Mr Haynes

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Acomb Primary School, York**

Following my visit with Phil Smith Her Majesty's Inspector to your school on 21 June 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 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, your deputy, three representatives from the governing body and two representatives from the local authority. I met pupils and examined school documents, including improvement plans, monitoring records of teaching and your latest progress data. I also observed teaching and learning in the eight classes in the school.

### **Context**

Since the recent section 5 inspection, two staff have resigned and the assistant headteacher has been a long term absentee due to serious illness. Two teachers have returned to work.

### **Main findings**

The school is reacting positively to the gauntlet thrown down by the requires improvement judgement. Leaders are demonstrating the ability to plan strategically and to systematically roll out a series of well-conceived improvement measures which are showing evidence of impact against each of the key issues. Staff have embraced the targeted training, coaching and mentoring which is improving the impact of their practice. Agreeing what good learning looks like, improving marking and feedback and encouraging greater ambition among pupils

Is also playing its part. Leaders are also challenging inadequacy. Nevertheless, leaders accept there is more work to do to ensure the most able pupils are consistently challenged, and that pupils know precisely how well they are doing in relation to their targets and what exactly they must do to improve further. Staff's increasing confidence and competence in routinely planning and delivering more routinely effective lessons is reflected in the faster progress pupils are now making across the school. Whilst there are some relative peaks and troughs in progress for particular groups such as boys and in subjects such as writing the general direction of travel is upward. Leaders recognise that the remaining inconsistency needs to be stamped out if all pupils are to flourish and make rapid progress. Changes to the curriculum are also bearing some fruit, with particular improvements noted in the quality of indoor provision in the reception classes. Attempts to reinforce pupils' literacy and numeracy skills throughout the curriculum, and connect pupils learning of across subjects through themes are a work in progress. Although, the Romeo and Juliet theme was applied to calculation of area in a mathematics lesson and children were immersed in their work on India when they ate the food, heard the music, wore the dress, and recounted some of the history, and then had to write about their experiences.

More recently the governing body is showing that it can strategically challenge and monitor robustly the school's leaders and the extent to which weaknesses are being tackled. Training has increased their ability to interpret achievement data, ask searching questions about the quality of teaching and to assess the impact of curriculum changes. The revised committees focus more on the key issues and allow governors to call staff to account regularly.

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:

- link formally with a good or better school to accelerate further the school's improvement
- ensure outdoor provision matches the improved indoor position in the Reception classes
- regularly inform all pupils how well they are doing in relation to their specific targets and precisely what they need to do to improve further
- make certain there is greater consistency in the extent to which more-able pupils are challenged in mathematics lessons.
- make sure all achievement targets are sufficiently challenging and represent at least good achievement for all groups of pupils throughout the school, including boys.

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**

Over time the local authority has not been effective in challenging the school to improve. More recently, their consultants and advisors are providing some effective specialist advice, guidance and support to improve pupils achievement in reading, writing and mathematics and the school's teaching and leadership capacity. They have brokered school to school support and are monitoring and evaluating the school's relative success in addressing its weaknesses. Work has also been undertaken to validate the accuracy of assessment practice and ensure governors recognise and can execute the full extent of their responsibilities.

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

Yours sincerely

John Young  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**