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27 June 2013

Mr Matthew Nightingale  
Headteacher  
Aloeric Primary School  
St Michael's Road  
Melksham  
SN12 6HN

Dear Mr Nightingale,

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

Following my visit to your school on 26 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 March 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, the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan and several other key documents illustrating how leaders and managers are checking on the work of the school were evaluated.

### **Context**

Since the school's inspection, there have been four new governors appointed and a new chair of the governing body. One teacher has left the school and the staffing structure has been re-organised. The leadership team has also been extended.

## **Main findings**

The new staffing structure has energised key members of staff in their efforts to become a good school. This enthusiasm is evident in the animated way staff talk about their areas of responsibility and the 'step change' in expectations since the last inspection. More precise job roles, with a defined academic or pastoral responsibility and the introduction of a set of 'non-negotiable' characteristics for effective teaching at the school, are having a positive impact. The new minimum requirement for all members of staff together with a 'teacher toolkit' training package has established a better awareness of what all teachers need to do to ensure all pupils make good progress. A new target setting system is now embedded across the school and this is helping to track pupils' progress far more carefully. Teachers' confidence in levelling pupils' work has improved and is enabling better quality feedback for pupils' and identifying their next steps in learning. More challenging targets for pupils are accelerating their academic progress.

Teachers are checking pupils' gaps in their mathematical knowledge and understanding more carefully following the introduction of a strategy to periodically group pupils of similar abilities from across the school. As a result, teacher's mathematics planning now matches activities to pupils' needs much more closely. More frequent 'structured conversations' between teachers and parents are developing a richer knowledge base about pupils' pastoral needs and enabling teachers to address any potential barriers to learning much earlier. New e-readers, a reading festival and 'boy friendly' reading materials are engaging boys in their learning much more and developing their enthusiasm in the subject. Teachers' growing confidence in English can be seen in Years 3 and 4 through the trialling of new lesson approaches linking subjects together on a rainforest theme.

The new school improvement plan has a number of strengths: it effectively identifies the improvements needed; planned actions are directly linked to the areas for improvement listed in the school's previous inspection report; and, it contains a very clear strategy for tackling underperformance. However, the large number of planned activities are not prioritised well enough to enable governors to effectively monitor the school's progress towards becoming good.

Pupil progress meetings held every six weeks are raising the expectation of all teachers. Unannounced 'drop-ins' by the headteacher, checking up on what is typically happening in lessons, is having a positive impact on the consistency and quality of teachers' marking. A greater number of leaders are now involved in monitoring activities which is developing their own ability to make firm and clear judgements on the quality of teaching and learning. This, combined with new lesson observation criteria, placing academic progress at the heart of judgements, is bringing about improvements to teaching across the school. There are some positive indications this is already paying dividends in the improved results of the Year 1 phonics checks.

The external review of governance has resulted in a precise action plan and is strengthening governors' ability to improve the overall leadership at the school. Helpful data summary sheets are enabling some, though not all, governors to get behind the pupil progress headlines and ask more challenging questions. The new chair of the governing body has a clear understanding about what needs to be done to become good school and beyond. His open and honest approach is welcomed by the school. A greater number of visits to the school to talk to pupils about their work are now taking place. Attendance at termly pupil progress reviews, and presentations of pupils' books in curriculum meetings is providing governors with first hand evidence about the progress being made in the school.

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:

- improve the school development plan by establishing a clearer timeline of steps to becoming a good school. The plan should also articulate the urgency and expectations precisely to staff and allow careful monitoring by the governing body.
- Less experienced members of the governing body should undertake a training course in how to analyse school data and ask challenging questions in order to hold the school to account.

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 school is benefitting well from the high quality external support offered by the local authority. A comprehensive mathematics audit has identified precise areas for improvement as well as strengths to share amongst staff. The Wiltshire Improving Schools Programme provides a significant amount of on-going leadership training and is helping to improve the quality of the school. The external governor audit, carried out by a National Lead Governor, has resulted in a more strategic approach to school improvement and the implementation of monitoring activities. Altogether, support for teaching, leadership and management are effectively bringing about improvements to the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Light  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**