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27 June 2013

Mrs Anne Hayes  
Headteacher  
Grange Primary School  
Owton Manor Lane  
Hartlepool  
County Durham  
TS25 3PU

Dear Mrs Hayes

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Grange Primary School, Hartlepool**

Following my visit with Lee Northern, Her Majesty's Inspector, 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 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 April 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with the acting headteacher, the headteacher designate and other senior leaders. I also met with pupils, members of the governing body and with a representative of the local authority. We discussed the action taken since the last inspection. I looked at a range of documentation including the school's post-Ofsted action plan. There was also a tour of the school conducted by the acting headteacher and the headteacher designate.

### **Context**

The acting headteacher is due to retire at the end of the summer term 2013. A new headteacher has been appointed and has been working in the school from 24 June 2013. An acting deputy headteacher has been appointed. One member of staff has resigned and four new members of staff have been appointed.

## **Main findings**

The acting headteacher, senior leaders and governors are taking the right actions to tackle the school's weaknesses. Underpinning this work is the direction provided by the post-Ofsted action plan which includes all areas of improvement from the inspection report. This report has been further improved by the input of the headteacher designate. The plan is developing and the leadership team, working with governors, is clear that its success will be measured by how rapidly teachers are able to demonstrate that their work shows a sustained impact on pupils' learning and achievement. A recently established sub-committee of the governing body is playing a key role in the monitoring of the plan's impact.

The school has established a regular pattern of meetings between teachers and senior staff so they can monitor the progress of the Raising Achievement Plan (RAP) and its impact on individual pupils. These meetings measure how effectively teachers are meeting the needs of learners and help teachers identify what works. The middle leaders with responsibility for literacy and numeracy play a key role here. They are ensuring that observations of teaching and learning and their analysis of assessment data are being used to inform the discussions and resulting actions. However, training is needed to ensure that all staff and governors are confident in the interpretation of data. Further support is being provided for these middle leaders by senior staff and two consultants. This has focussed on sharpening leaders' classroom observation judgements. It is envisaged that the consultants' time will reduce early next term as these leaders grow more confident in their roles.

There has rightly been a review of the role of teaching assistants. This has resulted in an increased involvement of these colleagues in the planning of lessons. Further training is planned drawing on the proven success of teaching assistants' work in Early Years.

The school's focus on improving pupils' skills in writing is beginning to have an impact. Pupils report that they have noticed increased opportunities to write at length with writing sessions now extended from 20 to 45 minutes. They have extra time to scope, plan and develop their work. They are also aware of more frequent opportunities to practise their writing in other subjects and see links between writing for a range of audiences and purposes in, for example, science and topic work. Pupils continue to be very positive about the ways in which their work is marked and the genuine, positive dialogue they have with teachers through their books. They increasingly know what they need to do to improve.

Since the appointment of the new headteacher, the governing body has sought additional help to support her introduction into post. Currently the school's previous headteacher is undertaking this work but this strategy requires review as the school moves into the next phase of its development. The LA is already supporting governors in this respect. Governors have an increasingly clear understanding of what they need to do to ensure that the school succeeds. However, governors need to be clearer about their role in evaluating the impact of the school's work, particularly in their interpretation of school performance data. Helpfully, individual governors are taking a role in monitoring specific aspects of the school's work so that they can gain keener insights into its overall effectiveness. This aspect of the governors' work is already well established in Early Years and is being extended to other areas, including literacy and numeracy.

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, as a matter of urgency, that the support provided by the Governing Body for the in-coming headteacher and for the literacy and numeracy leaders is relevant, cost effective and of the highest quality.
- Improve the school's assessment and tracking procedures so that these provide staff and governors with a clear understanding of the progress made by individuals and groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those entitled to pupil premium support.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection. HMI will visit the school again early in the autumn term in order to evaluate the extent to which senior leaders, governors and the local authority are tackling the weaknesses identified at this visit.

### **External support**

The local authority has moved effectively to support the school. A new link officer has been allocated who has supported the leadership and governors in sharpening plans for improvement. The officer will continue to visit the school on a regular basis to track progress. The local authority has helpfully provided the funding for the headteacher designate to spend time working in the school since her appointment.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Evans

**Her Majesty's Inspector**