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2 July 2013

Mr Cansell  
Headteacher  
Harwell Primary School  
The Styles  
Didcot  
OX11 0LH

Dear Mr Cansell

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

Following my visit to your school on 2 July 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 April 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you and another senior leader, school staff, a representative of the local authority and the Chair of the Governing Body plus one other governor to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school's post-inspection action plan was evaluated and I looked at documents used by leaders to monitor and evaluate the school's work. I also accompanied you on a walk around the school visiting a number of classrooms.

### **Context**

There have been no changes to the governing body or staffing since the previous inspection. However, two new members of teaching staff have been appointed to join the school in September to replace staff leaving at the end of the summer term.

## **Main findings**

Following the inspection in April you and governors have taken appropriate steps to improve the school. You have produced a post-inspection action plan that identifies some sensible strategies to address the areas in need of improvement identified by the inspection. The plan contains some short-term targets against which the impact of actions on the quality of teaching can be measured; however, these need to be continued further into the future so that governors can monitor longer term improvements in teaching.

Some sensible links have been established with two local schools in order that you can work with each other to improve teaching. These have the potential to improve the skills of staff in monitoring teaching and provide effective opportunities to share and develop good teaching practice. However, these links are very recent and their impact is yet to be seen. There has been an appropriate focus on establishing clear guidelines to staff on what constitutes good marking and feedback to pupils. The impact of this action now needs to be evaluated more rigorously through the monitoring of teachers' written feedback to pupils. A new whole school calculation policy has been established and this is beginning to lead to a more consistent approach to the teaching of calculation skills. The progress of different groups of pupils, including those eligible for the pupil premium funding (additional government funding for pupils entitled to free school meals, from service families or who are looked after by the local authority) is now being tracked more effectively. This will enable you and governors to more closely evaluate the impact of strategies being used to improve their achievement.

Governors have responded positively to the inspection report and have produced an action plan to improve their effectiveness. They have carried out an audit of their skills and are sensibly in the process of arranging training to address areas of identified weakness. In addition, they have commissioned a review of governance and this is to take place early in the autumn term.

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:

- set clear and measurable targets for the expected quality of teaching for at least the next 18 months , so that governors can more effectively evaluate the rate of the school's improvement
- evaluate the impact of work to improve teachers' written feedback to pupils through more regular and rigorous monitoring.

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**

A local authority adviser has worked closely with the school since the inspection and a helpful local authority post-inspection plan has been produced so that support to the school can be delivered in a timely manner. Some effective support has already been provided to the school for the Early Years Foundation Stage and for teaching in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Peter Sanderson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**