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22 July 2013

Mr R Dax  
Headteacher  
Comber Grove Primary School  
Comber Grove  
Camberwell  
London  
SE5 0LQ

Dear Mr Dax

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Comber Grove Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 17 July, 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 May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I met with you and the deputy headteacher, other staff and members of the governing body. I also held a brief telephone discussion with a representative from the local authority. I made short visits to lessons to look at teaching and learning and the quality of marking. I scrutinised a range of documents, including the latest data on pupils' achievement and the school's analysis of the impact of actions taken since the inspection. I also evaluated the school's Ofsted action plan.

### **Context**

There have been no contextual changes to the school since the previous inspection.

## **Main findings**

In the short period of time since the inspection, you and your staff have quickly identified the specific actions needed to secure improvements to the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

The school's monitoring shows that strategies to increase the proportion of lesson time for pupils to work on individual or group tasks have been effective. In the lessons I visited, pupils were engaged well in a range of independent learning activities which enabled them to solve challenging problems on their own or in small groups. Higher expectations about the quality of teachers' marking have secured clear improvements in the quality and frequency of written feedback. Pupils have noticed the improvements and can point to examples of how they have improved their work in response to teachers' comments. The school now needs to ensure that written targets now relate to clear assessment criteria that can be shared with pupils to strengthen their understanding of how to raise their attainment.

Monitoring of teaching and learning has been stepped up since the inspection and teachers welcome the increased opportunities to get feedback about the strengths of teaching and how it might be improved. Subject and phase leaders are working with teachers more regularly to improve the quality of teaching through increased observation and shared lesson planning. The timetable for September has been adjusted to provide increased time for middle leaders to work with staff to improve their practice. A full programme of professional development is planned for September to build on the training provided since the inspection. Its aim is to raise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

These improvements are beginning to result in improving achievement. In particular, teacher assessments from the recent Year 1 phonics screening check show very significant gains compared to last year. Effective training for teachers and support staff has improved the quality of phonics teaching and strengthened teachers' skills in identifying and correcting specific gaps in pupils' understanding. While attainment remains low by the end of Key Stage 1, it is better than last year and more pupils are now making good progress. Nevertheless, you and your staff know that much work needs to be done to ensure that groups in all years achieve consistently well.

Governors are very committed to the school and keen to develop their skills. They are increasingly skilled in asking pertinent, challenging questions but know that they need to strengthen their understanding of achievement data in order to compare the school's performance with other schools. Governors are monitoring the actions taken by the school to improve teaching and raise attainment and liaise regularly with the headteacher and other staff to check on progress. The school's Ofsted action plan identifies an appropriate range of actions to address the areas for improvement. However, the intended impact of the actions is not set out precisely enough to enable governors to check on whether the strategies are working sufficiently well to ensure that the school becomes good within the expected two years.

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:

- strengthen assessment criteria in lessons and over time so that pupils have a stronger understanding of how they can raise their subject-specific attainment
- provide training for governors to strengthen their understanding of pupils' achievement compared to achievement in other schools nationally
- strengthen the school's Ofsted action plan by including regular milestones and clear targets so that governors can check more easily on the progress towards becoming a good school.

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 from a good range of support from the local authority, including increased monitoring. Since the inspection, the local authority has supported the school by observing teaching and checking pupils' work in books to highlight strengths and weaknesses and moderate the school's own judgements. Support has also been brokered from two local schools to share the best practice in teaching and learning. The local authority is providing additional funding to pay for consultants to work with the school to strengthen the quality of teaching. A full review of teaching and learning is planned for November 2013 and I have asked the school to forward the findings of the review to Ofsted. This will help determine the likely timing and scope of any future monitoring of the school by Ofsted.

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

Yours sincerely

**Daniel Burton**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**