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15 July 2013

Caroline Dingle  
Headteacher  
Hurst Hill Primary School  
Paul Street  
Hurst Hill  
Bilston  
WV14 9AJ

Dear Mrs Dingle

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hurst Hill Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 12 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 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you and your deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and a group of pupils. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed, including information about pupils' achievement, notes of pupil progress meetings, and feedback to teachers following lesson observations and reviews of pupils' work. During the visit you joined me on short visits to classrooms.

### **Context**

Since the inspection, three members of staff have left the school. Three teachers have been appointed and will join the school in September 2013. Two members of staff have returned from maternity leave. Two new governors have been appointed to the governing body. A business manager has been appointed.

## **Main findings**

You and the deputy headteacher have a realistic view of the extent to which the school needs to improve. You have taken decisive actions to make sure that pupils' attendance improves. Your records show that more pupils are now attending school regularly and your evidence shows that this is making a difference to pupils' achievement. This information is carefully and regularly checked and improvements in individual pupils' attendance and achievement are presented clearly and shared appropriately with the parents, carers and families involved.

You are addressing weakness in teaching effectively. Teachers are now clear about what is expected of them and how they will be held accountable for pupils' achievement. Your records show that, as a result of better quality teaching, more pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and an increased proportion of pupils are now working at the levels expected for their age. However, you recognise that this is not yet good enough and that the amount of progress made by different groups of pupils is not yet sufficiently accelerated to make up for the legacy of past underachievement. Your monitoring evidence shows that the quality of teaching, particularly of writing, is improving quickly as a result of you following the advice of your local authority consultant. Your analysis of pupils' attainment in writing at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 shows an improvement in standards on previous years. In contrast, the school's plans and actions to improve pupils' achievement in mathematics lacks the same degree of focus and rigour.

After lesson observations, your written feedback to teachers identifies successes and areas for development but does not set sufficient targets for teachers to achieve and sustain outstanding teaching where appropriate. You confirm your judgements on teaching by using assessment data and pupils' work in order to gain a more detailed picture of strengths and weaknesses of teaching over time. Current systems for doing this are too complicated as information is held in too many different places. This makes it difficult to present a concise picture of the quality of teaching over time.

Your school improvement plan addresses all the key areas identified in the last inspection and includes suitable actions to drive improvement. Although you have a clear idea of when you intend the school to be a securely 'good' school, your plan lacks interim success measures. It also lacks any detail about who will evaluate the impact of actions taken. These two missing elements make it difficult for you, or governors, to ensure that the school is making sufficient progress in the agreed timescale.

Governors have a good understanding of their responsibilities and have taken appropriate actions to address the issues raised in the last inspection. They have quickly established clear systems of performance management and they are well-informed about the recent improvements to the quality of teaching. Documentation shows that governors visit classrooms regularly to look at pupils' learning. Governors

have established a School Improvement Committee. This group meets regularly to judge how much difference the school is making to pupils' achievement. However, since the inspection, new governors have been appointed and some governors are at the early stages in their understanding of the school's data on pupils' achievement. I recommend that appropriate external training is organised to help governors to further develop their understanding of achievement data so that they can take an independent view in order to hold school leaders to account.

Senior leaders and the governing body are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- devise an improvement plan for mathematics which includes clear actions and measurable success criteria to improve pupils' achievement
- refine systems for judging the quality of teaching over time and set targets, as appropriate, to increase the amount of outstanding teaching
- include time-specific interim success measures in the school improvement plan and clearly state who will evaluate the impact of the actions taken
- organise training and support to further develop governors' independent understanding of information on pupils' achievement.

### **External support**

The local authority has provided intense support for the school in the past but now views the school as requiring only a 'light touch' level of support. Local authority consultant support for improvements in English has been effective. This can be seen in improvements in pupils' achievement and in the quality of teaching, particularly of writing. Appropriate support from the local authority has helped the school to address staffing issues quickly and this has had a positive impact.

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

Yours sincerely

Marilyn Mottram  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**