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10 September 2013

Louisa Michie  
Headteacher  
Harlands Primary School  
Mallard Drive  
Uckfield  
TN22 5PW

Dear Ms Michie

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

Following my visit to your school on 10 September 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 June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

School leaders are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. However, this is not true of the governing body. Although governors have commissioned an external review of their practice, it is not scheduled to take place until October 2013. This delay has not been helpful to the school's leaders. Governors are well-intentioned and keen to hold the school to account, but lack the systems to do so. As a result, their effectiveness is limited. Since the section 5 inspection, a new clerk to the governors has been appointed and a few governors have increased their involvement in monitoring achievement and the impact of the school's work with more-able pupils and those eligible for the pupil premium. Nevertheless, governors' roles and responsibilities lack clarity and governors have not yet put together their own focused plan to support the improvement of the school and challenge school leaders effectively.

Further action should be taken to:

- ensure that governors urgently devise a focused action plan which includes mechanisms to hold school leaders to account.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings I met with you, three senior leaders, three governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school action plan and you took me on a brief tour of the school to visit all classes.

## **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection which judged the school to require improvement one teacher has left and been replaced with a newly qualified teacher. An additional teaching assistant and additional needs assistant have been appointed. A supply teacher has been employed on a long-term contract to cover for the absence of a class teacher.

## **Main findings**

Since the section 5 inspection senior leaders have focused sharply on the areas identified for improvement and taken prompt action to improve leadership and teaching. There is a refreshed and energetic air of determination among school leaders and the school's action plan includes challenging fortnightly deadlines that create a sense of urgency and purpose for all staff.

The first priority has rightly been to ensure that teaching improves and is consistently good or better. Systems for checking the quality of teaching and pupils' progress are now more systematic and thorough. Senior and middle leaders now observe teaching, evaluate pupils' results and scrutinise their books at regular, planned intervals. As a result, school leaders now have a much better idea about how well pupils are doing and they know exactly what teachers need to do to improve their work. Sensible and timely decisions have been made about the deployment of teachers and teaching assistants with particular classes and groups of pupils.

School leaders have correctly ensured that teachers now include more focused opportunities for pupils to follow up their teachers' advice, by requiring them to provide time for this in lessons. Teachers have also attended necessary training with the intention of improving their questioning skills.

A further key action has been to make sure that teachers have dedicated time to work together to share good ideas and plan sequences of lessons to interest pupils and match their abilities. Teachers value this strategy, although it is too soon to measure its impact on pupils' achievement.

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 advisor visits the school regularly and has provided useful advice about the action plan following the section 5 inspection. Close links with the Uckfield Town Teaching Alliance and a partnership with a local junior and teaching school have benefited school leaders and provided an effective source of support, particularly for newly qualified teachers and for raising the achievement of more-able pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Pearce

**Her Majesty's Inspector**