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16 October 2013

Ms Pauline Smart  
Abbey Junior School  
Barclay Road  
B67 5LT

Dear Ms Smart

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Abbey Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 15 October 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 8 May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- strengthen the school action plans to involve actions over an appropriate period of time and improve monitoring and evaluation procedures
- support subject leaders in making better use of achievement data
- ensure the governing body has appropriate training so they are able to hold leaders to account for their actions
- further develop the monitoring cycle to ensure all teachers receive guidance on how to improve their teaching.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, senior leaders, the mathematics team, representatives from the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The school action plans were evaluated, a number of short visits were made to lessons and school documentation was examined.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection, one class teacher has resigned and a new teacher appointed. Two governors have resigned from the governing body. A new leader for mathematics has been appointed and four teachers are new to the year group they are currently teaching.

## **Main findings**

Following the inspection in May 2013, a new action plan has been written by you and senior leaders. It is focused on the areas for improvement identified in the last Ofsted report. However, actions are not sharply focused enough and the monitoring and evaluation procedures are not rigorous enough. This was identified in the last inspection as an area for improvement. Furthermore, the plan has not been shared with governors and so they are not able to hold you and other leaders to account for your actions.

The plan indicates some indication of timescales but these do not continue past the next two months. As a result, there is a lack of clarity of how the intended actions will develop and improve outcomes for pupils. Subject leaders have devised action plans to improve their subject areas. Again these are not sharply focused on what needs to happen and they do not take into account the progress of specific groups. These actions do not include any detail beyond December 2013 and as a result, there is a lack of strategic direction of how the school will improve.

A new mathematics team has formed to improve teaching and learning and outcomes in mathematics. A range of monitoring activity has taken place to check how this work is developing. However, because the school's action plan is not rigorous enough, there is a lack of clarity about what checks need to be done and when they need to be completed. Furthermore, not all staff have received a formal lesson observation since the last inspection. As a result, there is a lack of precise guidance on how teachers should improve their teaching.

Work has been carried out to improve marking, especially in mathematics. The way to judge the success of pupils' work has altered and a system is in place to monitor how well pupils have achieved. When pupils have not fully understood their work, they attend 'mathematics surgeries,' where support staff provide extra guidance to help pupils catch up with their learning. In the past pupils were split into ability groups for their mathematics lessons. This is no longer the case, and the class teacher now holds responsibility for the teaching of all their pupils in their class. As a result, class teachers are more accountable for the progress of the pupils in their class. A list of non-negotiables has been devised, indicating the expectations for all mathematics lessons.

Governors are provided with more information about the achievement of pupils across the school. While data is regularly maintained, subject leaders are not analysing the data sufficiently. As a result, there remains a lack of clarity about how this information will inform the school's action planning. Governors are committed to supporting leaders in the quest to become a good school. They are visiting the school and a new committee is focusing on the school priorities. However, because the action plan has not been shared and governors have not been provided with detailed analysis of data they are not holding the leaders to account as they should. Individual governors access training from the local authority but there has not been any training for the whole governing body about how to hold leaders to account for their actions and in defining their roles and responsibilities.

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 local authority has facilitated links with local good schools. This is to provide support with teaching and learning and leadership and management. An advanced skills teacher is working to improve the teaching of mathematics and local authority officers are monitoring the performance of the school. They are supporting the monitoring programme by carrying out lesson observations, learning walks and looking at pupils' books with senior staff.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Millward  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**