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Mr Alan Brown
Hollybush Primary School
Fordwich Rise
SG14 2DF

Dear Mr Brown

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hollybush Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23 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 19 June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- Ensure the match of task to the pupils' learning needs is the key factor in all lesson planning and curriculum decisions.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and your deputy, members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement action plan was evaluated. HMI invited the senior staff to join him in the joint observation of teaching. Two lessons were evaluated and the views put forward by senior staff matched the judgements given by the inspector. HMI also reviewed a sample of the pupils' work from the classes visited.

Main findings

A very detailed school improvement plan has been produced setting appropriate timelines and challenging targets. However, there is almost too much detail and there is a need to focus on the quality of teaching and learning as a cumulative process across the school.

The outcomes of the 2013 Key Stage 2 national tests were not available to the inspection team when they visited the school last June. Overall, the results were notably stronger than those of the previous year and the percentage of pupils making expected progress was in line with or above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress was below the national figure in writing and mathematics, although notably stronger in reading.

During the lesson observations, HMI reviewed the current standard of pupils' work and progress being made in the upper school. Standards in year 6 were at or above age-related expectations representing a positive start to the autumn term. Standards in Year 5 were less positive because the challenges provided were not well-matched to the pupils' learning need. HMI reviewed a small sample of the pupils' work in both classes and noted that in Year 6, the teachers marking made his high expectations clear.

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 very clear programme of local authority support is evident in the school improvement plan with a clear focus on teaching and achievement. A clear analysis of the 2013 results has provided a sharp focus for discussions between senior staff and the local authority.

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

Yours sincerely

David Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector