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23 October 2013

Oweda Harrison  
Acting Headteacher  
Earlham Primary School  
Earlham Grove  
London  
N22 5HJ

Dear Ms Harrison

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

Following my visit to your school on 22 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 June 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. The school should take immediate action to:

- ensure that governance is sufficiently robust to provide strategic leadership and drive improvement more effectively
- ensure that all teachers' planning focuses on how activities are designed to drive more rapid progress for pupils of different abilities.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. I scrutinised a range of school documentation which included: achievement tracking data, minutes

of two Project Board meetings, teachers' planning documents and records of the monitoring of teaching.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection five newly qualified teachers have been appointed. The school is seeking to appoint a middle leader for Key Stage 1.

## **Main findings**

Since the last inspection, actions taken by senior leaders have not had sufficient impact in driving improvement at a rapid enough pace. Although the acting headteacher has shown determination to lead the necessary change, turbulence in staffing, ineffective governance and lack of capacity at middle leadership levels have all hindered the impact of planned improvements. Provisional data for 2013 show a drop in attainment at Key Stage 2, particularly in boys' writing. Results in both Key Stages 1 and 2 are well below the school's targets. Leaders have begun to develop more rigorous systems for tracking pupils' progress, but they have not linked this closely enough to evaluating the impact of interventions. Weaknesses in Key Stage 1 are not being tackled effectively, because the school has not yet successfully recruited a phase leader; this is limiting the current capacity to bring about improvement.

The acting headteacher, supported by her acting deputy and Early Years Foundation Stage leader, have raised expectations of staff. Rightly, they have focused on the quality of teaching to raise standards. The school's action plan identifies appropriate actions and resources needed and clearly details how success will be measured. Senior leaders have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have provided appropriate staff training to develop teachers' skills. They have observed all teachers since the beginning of this term and appropriate induction arrangements are in place to support and monitor newly qualified teachers. Where weaknesses have been identified, leaders have drawn up targeted action plans with clear milestones for improvement. They have put additional resource into place to improve the teaching of phonics; this has begun to bring improvements. However, the overall quality of teaching remains too variable across year groups. As a result, pupils are not making fast enough progress.

Recently, the acting headteacher and senior leaders have introduced weekly checks of teachers' planning. These show an increased focus on a variety of activities to engage pupils. However, leaders' expectations of the required detail are not always evident in these planning documents. Some teachers' planning demonstrates a clearer focus on the role of additional adults and references to different activities designed to challenge and support pupils of all abilities. However, other teachers do not plan in enough detail and do not focus clearly enough on how they will help

pupils to make better progress. Consequently, some activities are not matched carefully enough to pupils' needs and they make slower progress than they should. Teachers' marking is regular, but 'next steps' do not always provide enough challenge, particularly for more able pupils.

The governing body has not met since the last inspection. The recommended external review of governance has not taken place. Although the Chair of the Governing Body is committed to improving the school, he rightly identifies that the governing body does not currently have the necessary skills to provide strategic direction and appropriate levels of challenge to the school's leaders. The Chair has attended Project Board meetings. These have provided support and challenge, but actions to strengthen the governing body have been too slow. As a result, the pace of development since the last inspection has not been sufficiently urgent and key weaknesses identified in the last inspection remain.

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 headteacher has received valuable support from a National Leader in Education from a local outstanding primary school. This has enabled the school to establish a more accurate view of the quality of teaching and to identify priorities for improvement. In addition, links with a local secondary school have provided opportunities for staff training, which have enabled newly qualified teachers to improve their skills. The local authority has provided limited, but effectively targeted support. The local authority advisor has provided challenge and strategic advice to the school's leaders through visits to the school and his attendance at Project Board meetings. He has ensured that the school development plan is focused sharply on the improvements required.

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

Yours sincerely

Russell Bennett  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**