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10 December 2013

Mr Mark Rapps  
Headteacher  
Earl Spencer Primary School  
Streatfield Road  
Spencer Estate  
Northampton  
NN5 7DE

Dear Mr Rapps

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Earl Spencer Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 9 December 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 September 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- gather robust evidence to show how pupils' progress is accelerating for all cohorts and groups of pupils to tackle the trend of low standards
- explore options that will provide an external perspective on the school's work to support rigorous self-evaluation and sustainable improvement
- ensure that implementation of the governing body's monitoring plan provides evidence that governors are contributing to school self-evaluation and improvement.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the Local Authority Advisor, the Chair of the Governing Body and a parent governor to discuss

the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed including a Key Stage 2 monitoring report and the report arising from the external review of governance. A 'learning walk' was conducted with the headteacher.

## **Context**

There have not been any significant changes in the school's context since the inspection.

## **Main findings**

School leaders and governors have taken immediate action in response to the inspection. The school's improvement plan has been effectively updated to provide a sharp focus on areas identified for improvement. Actions are clearly linked to attainment and accelerated progress to tackle the trend of low standards in recent years. The plan is supported by clear milestones to check progress. Leaders recognise the importance of compiling robust evidence of pupils' progress over time. Systems to track, monitor and analyse progress are used increasingly to refine provision, and to check on the impact of intervention strategies.

A high priority is placed on improving teaching quality. Inspection findings have been used to personalise the training and support of identified teachers. Joint planning, team teaching and book scrutiny are used systematically to improve teaching quality. Plans are well advanced for working with a partner school to increase the proportion of 'outstanding' teaching. Steps have been taken to strengthen the role of teaching assistants in pupils' achievement. The performance management process is developing well supported by appropriate training. Work has commenced to strengthen the consistency and quality of marking.

School leaders are knowledgeable about the complex needs of pupils across the school. This work is supported by two assistant headteachers who are completing a national qualification on senior leadership. This has strengthened the focus on the progress of different groups of pupils. Work to improve the attendance of pupils shows some success. The level of attendance is higher than at a similar point last year. The importance of regular attendance is reinforced through the rewards system and communication with parents.

The governing body has responded positively to the external review of governance. The governing body's monitoring plan has become formalised with links to identified priorities. This work is yet to be embedded to demonstrate that governors are contributing effectively to self-evaluation and improvement. Governors have attended one training session on performance data. They have correctly identified that this aspects requires further input if they are to provide an appropriate level of challenge and support to the school. Leaders and governors acknowledge that

external validation of the school's work is an important aspect for consideration to sustain improvement.

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 works with a local cluster of schools to share and develop good practice. A programme is agreed for joint working with one school to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching at the school. The local authority advisor is in discussion with the school to agree other areas of work for collaboration. This includes access to funding for middle leader training. The advisor fulfils a monitoring role for the local authority; it is expected that a review will take place in the Spring Term, 2014.

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

Yours sincerely

Nada Trikic  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**