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17 December 2013

Mrs Diane Farrer  
Headteacher  
Broom Cottages Pupil Referral Unit  
Broom Road  
Ferryhill  
County Durham  
DL17 8AN

Dear Mrs Farrer

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Broom Cottages Pupil Referral Unit , Durham**

Following my visit to your school on 16 December 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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 October 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, members of the management committee and the local authority are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- simplify the approach to lesson observation in order to identify sharper improvement points for teachers, based on a shared view of good and better teaching
- strengthen the school improvement plan by stating more clearly, including at interim points, how the school will demonstrate good provision and outcomes.

### **Evidence**

During my visit, I held meetings with you, other school leaders, members of the management committee and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan and other school documentation, including records of observations of teaching. In addition, I undertook extended learning walks around all key stages. I scrutinised a range of pupils' work jointly with leaders from the school.

## **Main findings**

In response to weaknesses in teaching identified at the recent inspection, you have put in place a wide range of training and professional development opportunities for staff. The local authority has made a good contribution to this, including through facilitating visits to other schools and pupil referral units. You are rightly working with staff to develop a shared view of good learning and identifying those features of teaching which are to be 'non-negotiables'. This is an essential step in order to speed up the pace of improvement. However, existing approaches to judging the effectiveness of teaching are rather unwieldy, with many separate criteria, and make it difficult for school leaders to identify sharp improvement points for staff. Nevertheless, a scrutiny of pupils' work showed that staff are developing their teaching to better meet pupils' needs, especially for younger year groups. For example, changes to the way teachers mark pupils work is beginning to bear fruit, particularly in English. The good provision for pupils in key stages 1 and 2, noted at the recent inspection, has been maintained.

It is pleasing to see that the focus on improving pupils' behaviour has been sustained and strengthened. During the visit, the school was seen to be a calm and orderly learning environment. The school improvement plan identifies an appropriate range of priorities and actions, which are regularly reviewed by school leaders and the management committee. However, the plan would be further strengthened by sharper criteria for 'good' provision and outcomes against which progress can be evaluated at suitable interim points. Improvements in the use of assessment information are helping to provide a focus on greater levels of accountability across the school. Supported by the local authority, the membership of the management committee has been widened and strengthened, bringing greater levels of challenge to the school. Plans are also in place to restructure leadership responsibilities across the school, with the aim of ensuring a greater emphasis on the development of subject areas.

HMI will conduct a monitoring visit in the spring or summer term to evaluate the impact of actions undertaken by the school in response to the improvement points noted above. Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

The local authority has agreed to share with HMI its evaluation of the monitoring of teaching at the school, due to be carried out in January 2014.

## **External support**

The local authority has provided good support for the school. It has played a key role in strengthening governance arrangements and has worked with school leaders to develop good plans for restructuring management responsibilities. The local authority has also supported the school in providing valuable training for staff, including through informal partnerships with other providers, such as Linhope PRU in Newcastle and the Phoenix Centre in Darlington. This has enabled staff to develop their teaching by observing good practice at first hand.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Northern

**Her Majesty's Inspector**