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27 January 2014

Mr Stephen Norton  
Headteacher  
Larkhill Primary School  
Wilson Road  
Larkhill  
Salisbury  
SP4 8QB

Dear Mr Norton

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Larkhill Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 27 January 2014, 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 November 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:

- implement a more systematic programme of monitoring that focuses rigorously on how well underachieving pupils are catching up
- ensure the school's action plan sets out how and when leaders, including the governing body, will gauge the difference that actions are making
- set out end-of-year targets and interim objectives for each year group, to supplement the current milestones in the school action plan, so that leaders may evaluate the improvements more easily
- attend one of Ofsted's Better English events and consider how the key messages from inspection can be applied to Larkhill Primary School.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, I held discussions with you, the deputy headteacher, governors and a representative of the local authority to find out about the action taken since the last inspection. I visited all classes briefly, looked at written work in books and spoke with pupils. The school's action plan was evaluated alongside other documents including information about the outcomes of meetings to review the progress pupils make.

## **Context**

Since the last full inspection, a significant number of pupils have left and joined the school as a result of their parents serving in the armed forces. One teacher has been absent, long term, due to ill health.

## **Main findings**

The increased attention that you are giving to raising standards in writing is evident throughout the school. Examples of pupils' writing are displayed prominently and the new targets for writing are giving pupils a better understanding of what they need to do to attain a higher National Curriculum level.

You and the Chair of the Governing Body recognise that members of staff have not been held to account as rigorously as they should have. You have begun to take effective action to raise the levels of accountability. Leaders meet more frequently with teachers to discuss the progress pupils make and you will shortly undertake a review of the quality of teaching to supplement those of the school improvement adviser. Senior leaders have a clearer understanding of how well pupils are doing because pupils' progress is tracked more closely and the meetings held to discuss underachieving pupils happen more frequently. However, the checks made by leaders are not systematic enough nor do they focus rigorously on those pupils who underachieve.

Training provided by the deputy headteacher has improved teachers' understanding of what pupils are expected to achieve at each National Curriculum level. He has followed up the training swiftly so that each teacher now has a set of agreed exemplars to support them further.

The governing body knows the improvements that are needed in order for the school to become a good school. While an external review of governance is pending, the Chair of the Governing Body has acted decisively to put in place an interim plan of actions to improve governance. The records of meetings of the governing body have been improved to reflect the level of challenge provided by governors more accurately. Governors are now comparing the school's performance with that of other schools more closely.

The school's action plan sets out clearly how the areas for development arising for the last full inspection are being tackled. The plan draws closely on the inspection report and sets measurable 'milestones' to check the progress being made. However, the 'milestones' do not cover all year groups so it is difficult for leaders and governors to evaluate the improvements fully. The arrangements for leaders to check the progress being made are not clear enough.

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 supports and challenges the school appropriately through an established programme that was instigated before the last full inspection. Governors' participation in the programme, and supplementary training, has given them a clearer grasp of their roles and responsibilities. While officers maintain a close check on how well the school is tackling the areas for development, they do not report unequivocally whether things are improving fast enough. Support from the school improvement adviser has ensured that the school responds swiftly when teaching is less than good.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Hancock  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**