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10 February 2014

Kate Stone  
Hawthorn Primary School  
Hawthorn Road  
Kingstanding  
Birmingham  
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Dear Mrs Stone

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

Following my visit to your school on 7 February 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. 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 are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- arrange for an urgent review of governance so that areas for development can be identified and addressed quickly.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, your assistant headteacher, governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The post Ofsted action plan was evaluated. I was taken around the school during lessons and I evaluated further documentation including pupils' progress tracking records and records of monitoring activities.

## **Main findings**

Since the inspection in November 2013 you have appointed an assistant headteacher to further strengthen the leadership team. You have quickly established a shared vision for how the necessary improvements to the school can be implemented. Many of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection were already included in the 2013-2014 school improvement plans. Following the inspection, you quickly identified the priorities for action; organised appropriate training; and established procedures to check how well initiatives were implemented. Recent training has already inspired teachers to focus on the intended learning in every lesson. Informal and formal monitoring records provide evidence of teachers' efforts to help pupils to understand the intended learning and facilitate learning with appropriate activities and experiences.

Regular staff meetings have provided opportunities for whole staff training where barriers to pupils' learning are discussed and solutions agreed. Staff identified a weakness in pupils' ability to solve problems in mathematics. Discussions led to a new whole-school policy in approaches to problem solving. In addition, staff shared ideas about how teaching assistants could help to make the most of learning for all pupils. A similar process led to changes in approaches to teaching letters and sounds in Reception. Improvements were rapid and when assessments were conducted in December, staff were able to celebrate the highest ever standards achieved in Reception. Your informal and formal observations of teaching have added to the increased focus on teaching and its impact on learning. Your joint lesson observations with the school improvement partner provide detailed evaluations of the quality of teaching seen. The records show thorough assessments of a range of teaching skills and techniques. The feedback closely relates the teaching with how well the pupils learn and how the teaching assistants contribute to the pupils' success. Development points are clear and relevant.

You have established end-of-year targets for every pupil. Staff are increasingly aware that no matter what knowledge and skills are lacking in pupils on entry to the school, teachers are responsible for the pupils' rapid progress. The rate of pupil's progress is now a central feature of discussions and reviews carried out with leaders and staff. You have purchased a new tracking system to enable comprehensive checks on rates of progress as well as quickly identify those pupils not making expected, or better than expected, progress. The deputy and assistant headteacher have also considered additional resources to support pupils' learning as well as revise current practice so that learning is maximised. Phase leaders are involved appropriately in weekly meetings to review their findings from lesson observations and checks on the quality of work in pupils' books. These reviews have helped leaders to look closely at the quality and quantity of pupils' work. Furthermore, they have been able to identify where agreed practices in marking pupils' work have not been applied and plan how to ensure expectations are met in future.

You have established links with a National Leader for Education who is also able to provide a valuable link with a National Leader of Governance. Opportunities for teachers to observe lessons at Moor Hall have been discussed. In addition, you are keen that the skills of good quality teaching within Hawthorn are identified and shared for the benefit of all. You have established suitable links for governor training. However, it is now urgent that an independent review of governance is conducted so that any training is tailored to their specific needs and requirements. Governors have received some training in the use of data dashboard but their ability to hold you and other leaders to account is at an early stage of development.

Your school improvement plan includes all the areas for development identified in the last inspection. Each action is clearly linked with indicators of measurable improvement. These indicators refer to the developments expected of both staff and pupils and are closely aligned with the projected increase in rates of pupils' progress. Regular monitoring activities are planned to check that new, agreed practice is implemented consistently. The responsibility for improvements has been sensibly delegated. All of the planned activities are spread across a suitable timeframe: ambitious but realistic.

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**

You have quickly established links with a National Leader for Education who has been able to provide a National Leader of Governance. Support is still at an early stage but discussions have already covered how the NLE might be able to provide on-going support in both improving the quality of teaching and reviewing and supporting governance. A representative from the local authority will review the school's progress each half term.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for insert local authority name and as below.

Yours sincerely

Deana Holdaway  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**