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3 March 2014

Mr Gavin Evans  
Headteacher  
Hilltop Primary School  
Hilltop Road  
Frindsbury  
Rochester  
Kent  
ME2 4QN

Dear Mr Evans

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

Following my visit to your school on 28 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 second 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:

- agree a common format for all school action plans and reports for the governing body
- increase the impact of all senior staff through further tailored support
- develop the skills of the governing body in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the two assistant headteachers, the subject leaders for English and mathematics, the coordinator of provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs (SENCo) and the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage. I also met with the Chair and Vice Chair of the

Governing Body and the school challenge and improvement leader (SCIL). I evaluated the reports provided by middle leaders and the action plans that had been drawn up in response to the recommendations made on my previous visit.

## **Main findings**

Senior staff and key subject leaders have responded positively to the findings of the previous monitoring visit. They are all determined to develop their leadership skills and support the headteacher in his drive to improve the school. Training provided by the local authority has helped school leaders to develop their understanding of published reports on pupils' achievement such as RAISEonline. They have a greater awareness of how outcomes for pupils at Hilltop compare to other pupils nationally. Senior staff and key subject leaders have each carried out a review of their area of responsibility and now understand the strengths and weaknesses of current provision. Some, such as the subject leader for mathematics have undertaken a very detailed review of information on pupils' progress and this has helped to focus attention on particular year groups where some pupils may be vulnerable to underachievement.

Action plans are more sharply focused on what needs to be improved and, although the format is not consistent, most plans have measurable short-term and long-term targets and clear timescales.

Key governors have a high profile in school and are kept well informed about pupils' progress through reports from the headteacher. Governors are keen to develop their role in monitoring the work of the school through visits to classrooms and would like further training on this.

HMI will visit the school towards the end of the summer term to review progress and will provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

## **External support**

All senior staff and subject leaders have engaged well with the training and support they have received from local authority officers. Support for the English subject leader and assistant headteacher (curriculum) has been particularly well focused and effective. The local authority has agreed to maintain current levels of support to help senior staff and key subject leaders develop their roles further and accelerate the rate of improvement.

Links with schools in the local 'teaching alliance' are developing well. Regular 'Teach-meet' sessions held at Hilltop will provide opportunities for staff to share good practice with colleagues in other schools.

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

Yours sincerely

Melanie Cox  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**