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6 March 2014

Mr Leslie Hawkins  
Headteacher  
Halstead Community Primary School  
Otford Lane  
Halstead  
Kent  
TN14 7EA

Dear Mr Hawkins

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Halstead Community Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 6 March 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 December 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:

- merge the different plans for improvement into one manageable document which includes quantifiable targets and milestones so that the impact of actions on pupils' progress can be measured at set points throughout the year
- make sure that all the information used provides an accurate picture of pupils' progress
- build the leaders' skills to drive improvement themselves with less reliance on support from the local authority.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, I had meetings with you and English subject leader, two members of the governing body and two representatives from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the section 5 inspection in December 2013. I walked around the school with you. The school plans for improvement were evaluated. I looked at a range of documents that you provided for me which included information about the progress that pupils make in different classes and subjects, records of checks on pupils' books, notes of visits from local authority advisers and governors, minutes of governors' meetings and notes of regular discussions between you and the Chair of Governors.

## **Context**

There have been no significant changes since the last section 5 inspection. The Vice Chair of Governors has stepped down from the role but remains on the governing body. You have taken responsibility for the leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage and teach that class for just less than one day every week.

## **Main findings**

With support from the local authority, you have drawn up plans to address the priorities identified in the last inspection. The improvement plan includes measureable targets linked to pupils' attainment and progress. Milestones to check the progress being made towards these targets throughout the year are not specific. An overview using average progress masks variations in different subjects and year groups. In Year 6 average progress information suggests that progress in writing is good but individual pupil data shows that a third of the pupils have made no progress. The proportion of pupils in each year group who need to make more progress to help them make up previous lost ground is not clear. You and governors recognise that a simpler way of providing an accurate overview is needed.

As well as an improvement plan the school has a 'rapid action plan' which identifies a time line of activities. No information about the difference that activities are expected to make is included. Milestones are vague and do not reflect the intended short-term timescale of the plan. Having two separate plans is unhelpful and they could more usefully be merged and refined.

Despite these shortcomings in planning, actions taken since the last inspection have been appropriate and focused on the key priorities. Weekly checks have looked at whether work for pupils of different abilities is pitched at the right level and challenging the most able. Training on making sure every lesson counts is helping to improve classroom practice. You have observed lessons with another local headteacher to make sure that your judgements of teaching and learning are secure.

The English subject leader looked at pupils' books to make sure that they have enough time to write at length. The findings were shared and suggestions for improvement made. Another look at books then took place to check that teachers acted on what was said. Displays around the school reflect the school's focus on improving writing.

The Early Years classroom has been organised more effectively and support from a local school has been arranged to make sure that judgements about children's learning in the Early Years are accurate. Governors have rightly asked you for regular information about the progress that children in this age group make.

Discussions with teachers about the progress that pupils make throughout the school take place six times a year. You only attend three of these meetings. You should attend all of these meetings to provide timely challenge, support and hold staff to account effectively.

The impact of actions taken since the last inspection on improving teaching and learning has not yet been analysed in detail. Governors ask challenging questions about the data that are presented to them and are focused on the key priorities. There needs to be greater clarity about how leaders will be held accountable for making improvements quickly enough for the school to be judged as good at its next section 5 inspection.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. I will visit again in the summer term to observe how effectively you support and challenge teachers in meetings to discuss pupils' progress.

### **External support**

You and your Chair of Governors have attended Ofsted's getting to good seminar. The English leader has registered for the Better English conference that is taking place shortly. As writing is a key priority it is important that you attend. You are beginning to make useful links with other local schools to help the school improve and the local authority continues to provide you with a high level of support. External support needs to build the school's own capacity to drive improvements if leadership and management are to be judged to be good at the next inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Corporate Director of Education, Learning and Skills for Kent.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Krafft  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**