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2 July 2014

Mrs Liz Miles  
Acting Head of School  
Silverdale Primary School  
Perth Road  
St Leonards-on-Sea  
East Sussex  
TN37 7EA

Dear Mrs Miles

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

Following my visit to your school on 1 July 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 June 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:

- ensure that the current Year 2 and Year 3 pupils receive the very best possible teaching and curriculum when they are in Years 3 and 4, to help them make up gaps in their learning
- re-appraise the approach taken to teaching phonics (linking letters and sounds) in Reception and Key Stage 1 to raise pupils' attainment
- continue to develop the work of the leaders of all subjects in the curriculum, so that pupils learn more deeply in each subject.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, I met with you, the executive headteacher, senior staff and heads of year. We toured the school together, briefly observing in lessons and looking at examples of pupils' work. I met with members of the governing body and representatives of the local authority. I scrutinised documents, including the school improvement plan, minutes of meetings and data showing the progress and attainment of pupils in English and mathematics.

## **Main findings**

You, with the senior team and executive headteacher, lead the school very well. Your school is changing swiftly for the better. Members of staff know what they are aiming towards and are held appropriately accountable for their work. They are also supported in bringing improvement. Teachers with leadership responsibilities, including year leaders, contribute strongly, with well-considered job descriptions. You are aware, however, that the roles of all subject leaders need further development; albeit some useful work has begun on this.

The school's management systems are very well organised. You have done really well to get these so successfully established, or improving, so quickly. The school evaluates itself accurately. An assistant headteacher makes good records and analyses of pupils' progress in English and mathematics. Performance management arrangements for staff are appropriate. The school improvement plan is well organised and effective. I was pleased to see that it now has sharper targets for pupil attainment. You have made astute decisions about staffing matters.

Your well-organised records indicates that teaching has improved during the year, partly as a result of training and coaching for staff. This view was supported by the short visits we made together to lessons. We saw pupils well engaged by supportive and clear teaching. There was also evidence of more consistent teaching methods in use across the school.

You also have clear evidence of pupils' better progress and attainment in English and mathematics. There is likely to be improvement in results at both Key Stages 1 and 2 this year. It is particularly pleasing to note a marked rise in the numbers of pupils gaining higher levels, showing teachers' rising expectations. The gap between the attainment of pupils entitled to additional pupil premium funding and their classmates is, for the most part, reducing. This funding is judiciously spent.

However, the improvements in pupils' achievement are not universal. Children in the Reception year have attained at about the same level as their predecessors the previous year. Pupils currently in Year 2 show relatively weak attainment in writing, despite many making strong progress. Those pupils in this year group retaking their

phonics screening test from the previous year were not all successful enough. Year 3 pupils' performance causes some concern more generally. We discussed the

importance of ensuring that the pupils moving into Years 3 and 4 next year, in particular, receive great teaching.

In Year 1, despite the school trialling new approaches this year, results in the phonics screening test have not notably improved from those in 2013. This causes you some understandable disappointment. With the staff, you have started to consider why this happened; the school needs urgently and robustly to complete this review and make the necessary changes in phonics teaching for next year.

You are rightly developing the school's curriculum so that pupils have a broader and richer experience. It was good to note the 'Forest School' and regular swimming lessons, for example. The four 'curriculum drivers' are well chosen and correctly aspirational for the pupils. There remains more to do, however, to ensure that pupils' learning across all subjects is deep enough, and well assessed. We noted, for instance, some music teaching and learning which was not of a high enough standard. Members of staff were keen to provide this musical opportunity but did not show the necessary subject expertise (in counting time and beats) to do so confidently. This exemplifies why strong subject leadership is needed to guide staff.

Pupils' behaviour observed in lessons was obedient and positive. There have, however, been some recent fixed term exclusions. Pupils' attendance is about average. We discussed how the type of exciting curriculum you are working towards can be very useful in encouraging good behaviour and attendance.

The well-led governing body continues to develop its work successfully. The governors with whom I met know the school well. They take part in appropriately detailed discussions with members of staff and carry out useful, focused visits to the school. Governors show confidence in school leaders. They are aware that they need to show more clearly how they challenge the leaders and keep the school 'on its toes'.

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 has provided, throughout this school year, a significant quantity of useful, and clearly-targeted, support in many different areas of work. School leaders have used this support, and the associated advice, well.

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

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**