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Sarah Bourn  
Headteacher  
South Hill Primary School  
Heath Lane  
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Dear Miss Bourn

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to South Hill Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 2 October 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 June 2014. 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:

- sharpen the new pupil log system by identifying planned interventions at the initial meeting, rather than at subsequent meetings, so that phase leaders can monitor progress more effectively
- increase the impact of marking by ensuring that it is sharply focused on guiding pupils to improve their work and that teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to reflect on and respond to what has been written
- ensure that teachers model the school's handwriting policy at all times.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was

evaluated and you took me on a tour of the school. You shared with me the results of this year's Key Stage 2 national tests and I checked the school's single central register.

## **Context**

Two teachers left the school at the end of the academic year and three new teachers joined the school in September. You have established a completely new senior leadership team: the acting deputy headteacher was appointed to the substantive role and two assistant headteachers have been employed, one from amongst the existing staff. Two new office staff, two teaching assistants and a governor have also joined the school.

Extensive building works are currently taking place on site as the school expands from one to two classes per year group. The new building will provide eight classrooms and an administration area when the work is complete.

## **Main findings**

The proportion of pupils who attained at least the expected Level 4 in the Key Stage 2 tests improved this year and was above the national average in all areas, including at the higher levels. Results at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, in the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check and at the end of Key Stage 1 were all above the national average. The school's own data show that the proportion of pupils who made at least the expected amount of progress was also above the national average.

The school's action plan is detailed, thorough and clear. It relates directly to the improvement points from the last inspection and is focused on the right priorities. The plan includes half-termly milestones from July 2014 until the end of this academic year. The school has made a prompt start in making the required improvements and has a realistic view of how long it will take to complete this process. A strategic leadership group – including governors as well as senior staff – was quickly set up and has already met twice to review and monitor the action plan.

You have established an entirely new leadership team since the last inspection and it is working well. Since September, fortnightly phase meetings have been introduced and these are focused sensibly on pupils' progress, giving teachers an opportunity to identify pupils who are making less progress than they should. Senior leaders now need to tighten these procedures further by ensuring that they know what interventions teachers are planning at the first meeting rather than at subsequent meetings. This will allow them to monitor the impact of interventions more closely and to be more effective in holding teachers to account.

The school's marking policy was reviewed in the summer term and was introduced fully in September. Senior leaders report that improvements are evident in pupils'

books but you are all fully aware that further work is needed. Marking is not yet sufficiently focused on guiding pupils to improve their work and they are not always given opportunities to respond to their teacher's comments.

A new handwriting scheme, new policy and daily handwriting sessions have been introduced. You have looked at pupils' work, and leaders say that presentation is improving. While some books are neat and well-presented, the quality of work in pupils' books is still too variable. You now need to ensure that teachers model the school's handwriting policy at all times so that pupils are constantly reminded of the standard expected.

The school is developing its new curriculum and this is continuing through a series of staff meetings. Subject coverage has been mapped and there is an increased expectation that pupils will have the opportunity to write across the curriculum. Pupils' books show examples of writing in other subjects other than English, and you are aware that this now needs to be expanded and built on.

### **External support**

The local authority provides good support and reviews the school's performance regularly. It has provided matched funding to double the number of numeracy and literacy consultancy days provided from five to 10. A link has been established with another local school and valuable support has been provided by its headteacher, a local leader in education. Two teachers are attending a middle leadership course provided by the local authority. The school has recently joined a school improvement project with other local schools but it is too soon to judge what impact this will have.

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

Yours sincerely

Wendy Varney  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**