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Alison Wyld  
Harmans Water Primary School  
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Harmans Water  
Bracknell  
Berkshire  
RG12 9NE

Dear Ms Wyld

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Harmans Water Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 17 October 2016, 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 November 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in November 2015, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you and senior leaders, three governors and two representatives of the local authority. I visited the early years classrooms and outside areas. At lunchtime, I spoke to some pupils and observed pupils' behaviour outside. Together with the English and mathematics leaders, I looked at pupils' exercise books. I considered a range of documents, including the school development plan, records of checks on teaching and learning and minutes of governors' meetings. I spoke with seven parents in the playground and took into

account 11 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

## **Context**

You were appointed in April 2016. A new deputy headteacher, who was previously an interim leader at the school, formally took up her post in September. The inclusion manager also started in September, along with six teachers to replace those who left in July. A new chair of governors was appointed in March 2016.

## **Main findings**

You have wasted no time in making important changes to the school. You are determined to secure the best possible outcomes for pupils. You have identified the right priorities and devised suitable and ambitious improvement plans to tackle all of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Leaders, governors and staff share your aims. Parents appreciate the way that you keep them informed and some can see that the school is changing for the better. One parent said, 'It feels like a different school.' A positive culture prevails and staff are working together much more to develop teaching and learning.

Leadership is shared more widely. You have focused on building the skills and expertise of middle leaders by providing training, as well as support, from other senior leaders. For example, middle leaders are now involved in carrying out checks on teaching and learning. Increasingly, they provide feedback to staff that is helping to raise the quality of teaching and learning. Indeed, records show that teachers are checking pupils' learning during lessons and using this to adjust their teaching more often.

The English and mathematics leaders are securing improvements in their subjects. Both have wisely drawn on the support of external advisers to introduce important changes to the curriculum and provided training for staff. Consequently, teachers' subject knowledge in English and mathematics has increased. Pupils' books show that lessons now more accurately match pupils' needs and tasks are increasingly challenging.

Some changes introduced by the previous consultant headteacher have had an impact on pupils' outcomes. The new approach to teaching phonics has ensured that by the end of Year 2, most pupils have reached the standard expected for their age. Last year, Year 1 pupils made rapid progress to catch up in phonics, so that the large majority met the expected level. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have also increased. At the end of key stage 2 in 2016, the proportion of pupils exceeding the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics was similar to the national average.

You have further developed work to improve pupils' behaviour. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour have reduced significantly since April. Staff implement the new

behaviour policy and 'traffic light system' with increasing consistency. There is greater support for pupils with challenging behaviour, who benefit from the expertise of a dedicated member of staff to support their behaviour, and spaces to calm down in, such as the 'quiet room'. At lunchtimes, there is a wide variety of activities on offer to promote good behaviour. Pupils delight in the quiet of the 'reading zone', sharing Lego with friends, sporting activities led by coaches and 'sports leaders' and taking turns to become a responsible 'litter picker'. One pupil explained the impact that these changes have had: 'The behaviour has changed a lot for the better. It's much nicer now.'

The learning environment for children in the early years has improved. The layout of the classrooms has been redesigned so that all children have equal access to activities outside. Both inside and outside, children have opportunities to develop their skills and abilities across the different areas of learning. The early years leader ensures that children are able to learn in small groups, with their classmates and individually. Adults are on hand to challenge children, including the most able, to take appropriate next steps. You have worked with the early years leader and identified some areas of learning that children did not achieve as well in last year. She has provided greater opportunities for children to practise their reading, writing and number skills. For example, one group of children enjoyed playing a beanbag game with an adult, where they counted up and wrote their own scores. Children read the scoreboard carefully to see if they were on track to win.

There is a new assessment system in place. Teachers can record the progress that pupils are making during lessons and over time. They have used these checks on pupils' learning to identify more accurately different groups of pupils, such as the most able, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, and provide suitable activities to extend their learning. For example, in English, the most able pupils are challenged to work more creatively, using their knowledge of a broad range of high-quality texts. Staff are also able to better identify pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The new inclusion manager has started to review the effectiveness of systems in place to support these pupils.

You have appointed a new 'pupil premium champion' to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. This leader has worked with staff to identify the barriers that disadvantaged pupils face and developed a strategy for the use of the additional funding that more accurately meets the needs of these pupils. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work.

Governors have made some changes to increase their effectiveness. The governing body now has systems in place to hold leaders to account using the school development plan. Nevertheless, governors recognise that in the past they did not challenge leaders enough and some opportunities were missed to move the school forward. In particular, governors have not ensured that the external review of the school's use of the pupil premium has taken place.

## **External support**

The local authority has provided considerable effective support to the school. Over the past three years, the local authority has held the school to account through the standards monitoring board. This has helped to secure improvements to provision, particularly in the early years, and governance.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bracknell Forest. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Dulon  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**