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24 April 2013

Judith Sparks  
Hillmead Primary School  
Woburn Avenue  
Bishop's Stortford  
CM23 4PW

Dear Ms Sparks

### **Monitoring visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to Hillmead Primary School, Bishop's Stortford**

Following my visit to your school on 22 April 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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 February 2013.

#### **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with yourself and the deputy headteacher. We jointly carried out brief visits to lessons. I met with four governors and spoke to the local authority school improvement partner. I evaluated your post Ofsted action plan and individual plans for pupils with special educational needs.

#### **Context**

Significant staff changes have happened since the inspection. Two teachers have left and three are new to the school, including the special needs coordinator. Four teachers have taken on new responsibilities, including the leadership of mathematics and information and communication technology. The Governing Body is currently led by an acting chair pending re-election of a chair of governors in May 2013.

#### **Main findings**

The school is making reasonable progress towards becoming a good school. The governors and your senior team drive improvement through fortnightly reviews of a

clear action plan. The improved behaviour of pupils is a significant achievement and progress on this key issue is good. As I walked around the school, I saw pupils who were eager to learn. There was a noticeable 'buzz' in lessons with pupils proud to explain to me what they were doing and why.

With the support of governors, an external consultant and the deputy headteacher you are rapidly improving teaching and learning. Teachers now check carefully how well pupils are getting on although they do not always set work which matches pupils' ability well enough. For example, during our joint visits to lessons, we saw that some tasks are still not demanding enough, particularly for pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The emphasis on developing literacy skills is visible through attractive displays around the school. These show that a love of reading and writing is now encouraged from an early age.

You are using a new central system to analyse data on outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics and challenge teachers about pupils' progress. Staff are not using available data well enough to inform the individual plans for pupils with special educational needs and to adjust targets for pupils making more than expected progress across all years.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, I recommend that further action is taken to:

- increase challenge in the Early Years Foundation Stage to build upon the already good level of knowledge children bring to the school and ensure that accurate assessment informs the work set at Key Stage 1
- use data more effectively to improve the quality of individual plans for pupils with special educational needs and adjust the targets set for the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The school welcomes the high level of challenge that the local authority improvement adviser provides and draws readily on the expertise of consultants. Links with other schools enable teachers to observe outstanding practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Marianick Ellender-Gelé  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**