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10 October 2013

Mr Jim Smith  
Headteacher  
Tudhoe Colliery Primary Academy  
Front Street  
Spennymoor  
County Durham  
DL16 6TJ

Dear Mr Smith

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Tudhoe Colliery Primary Academy, Durham**

Following my visit to your school on 9 October 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 June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and the Directors of Tudhoe Learning Trust are taking urgent and effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- bring forward plans for teachers to observe outstanding teaching in other schools so they gain a wider understanding of what good and outstanding teaching looks like and incorporate any good practice they see into their own work
- draw the half-termly assessments of pupils' progress into a format that governors can use to check how well pupils are doing towards their targets more regularly.

### **Evidence**

During the visit I met with you and the deputy headteacher, two middle managers, the Chair of the Directors of Tudhoe Learning Trust, a group of governors and an adviser from Durham County Education Development Service. I observed two part-lessons with you and looked at pupils' books, teachers planning in those lessons. I also read a number of documents such as the school improvement plan, the school's behaviour log, your reports on lessons observed since the inspection and notes of visit from local authority staff.

## **Context**

Since the inspection there have been a number of changes in staff and in staff roles and responsibilities. Two new Key Stage leaders have been appointed. Four teaching staff have left and a similar number appointed. A teaching assistant and an additional part-time teacher have been appointed to work with small groups of children.

## **Main findings**

Although disappointed with the outcome of the inspection, you, staff, governors and Directors quickly harnessed your energies to tackle the issues identified as in need of improvement. You have a shared vision for the school to be good by Easter 2014. The succinct plans and actions immediately put in place have been quickly built on since the beginning of term and are already demonstrating impact. Staff training and support has ensured a much more consistent approach to teachers' planning and delivery of lessons. Observations by you and those we observed together indicate the quality of teaching is improving.

Teachers use information about how well children are doing towards their targets, to plan activities every day that will help them achieve their targets and move on to their next steps quickly. This information is also used to provide rapid and flexible extra support in lessons or in small groups for any child who is struggling with any aspect of their work. Plans are in place for teachers to observe outstanding teaching in other schools but this is not happening quickly enough. Teachers' assessments of pupils' learning are well-used in lessons to plan for pupils' next steps but as yet the information is not presented to governors in a way that they can check easily how well pupils or groups of pupils are doing over a half-term.

The recently appointed leaders of Key Stage 1 and 2 are working effectively with you and the deputy headteacher to develop their skills in monitoring the work of the school. They are involved in checking teachers' planning, pupils work and lead weekly Key Stage meetings with staff to make sure children are making progress towards their challenging targets. They have conducted lesson observations with you and deputy headteacher. Reports from their observations identify the strengths in teaching observed and aspects that need to improve clearly. They have plans to observe teaching independently before the end of term where they will check to make sure improvement points have been acted upon.

Governors and Directors of the Learning Trust have reflected on the outcome of the inspection and are determined to improve their effectiveness and skills in holding you and staff to account for the achievements of pupils across the school. They have accepted the need to have a better knowledge of the work of the school and are now observing the school's work first hand in a variety of ways. For example, the Chair of Governors has monitored you carrying out a work scrutiny. Governors have programmed visits to classrooms and have a clearer understanding of different aspects of the curriculum and pupils achievement through their recently developed role as link-subject governors. Governors have received local authority training on understanding school performance information such as Ofsted's data dashboard and published information about the school, to understand the progress of different groups of pupils in the school more fully. Monthly clear

and easy to read progress reports are provided to governors on the action taken by staff and the positive difference actions are making. For example, actions to improve the recording of behaviour incidents were rapid and robust systems have been in place since the beginning of July. A small group of governors have become part of a School Support Group set up by the local authority to check and monitor the impact of actions within the action plan. Evidence from governors' monitoring reports identify precisely the improvement in the proportion of teaching that is good or better, the improvements in pupils' achievements in Key Stage 1 and the improvements in the quality of pupils' work in their books.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. We agreed that I would revisit the school later this term to check the quality of teaching and the progress pupils currently in the school are making, with a view considering whether the school's next inspection should be brought forward to the spring term 2014 if progress against the areas for improvement is sufficiently rapid.

### **External support**

Although an academy, the school maintains strong links with the local authority and are receiving effective guidance, advice and support from one of the authority's school improvement officers and an educational development partner. They meet regularly with you and have provided welcome advice in compiling the action plan which is simple and clear, and in checking progress and the impact of your plans through the monthly School Support Group meetings.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Department for Education's Academies Adviser Unit and the Directors of Tudhoe Learning Trust. Because of your close working relationship with the local authority I am also providing a copy of the letter to the Director of Children's and Adults Services for Durham County Council.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow

**Her Majesty's Inspector**