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2 December 2010

Mrs Wilson
Heathfields Infant School
Saxon Close
Wilnecote
Tamworth
B77 5LU

Dear Mrs Wilson

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Heathfields Infant School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Wednesday 1 December 2010 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the Chair of the Governing Body and the representative of the local authority who made themselves available at short notice, and also pupils and those teachers observed during lessons, as well as the staff and parents spoken to during the visit.

Staffing has been stable as only one class teacher joined the school on a temporary basis to replace a teacher. Pupil numbers are continuing to rise and the school will be increasing the number of classes next year.

As a result of the inspection on 9 June 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The school has addressed the shortcomings identified at the time of its last inspection relating to safeguarding and pupils' health and safety. The central record of suitability checks on staff was scrutinised and it meets the current government requirements. Good progress has been made in ensuring that the Early Years Foundation Stage fully meets welfare requirements that ensure the safety and well-being of Reception children in both indoor and outdoor areas. Risk assessments and policies have been updated, and the local authority has made the necessary checks to ensure that the school fully meets requirements. The parents and carers spoken to believe that pupils are safe and well cared for by a committed staff team, views that are consistent with inspection findings.

Although pupils' achievement is satisfactory, their attainment fluctuates each year as a result of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning. There is an improving trend as pupils are on course to reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are in line with those expected by the end of Year 2. However, there is too much variability in the pace of learning because teachers do not always expect enough of the pupils. The expertise of effective teachers in the school has helped to re-focus teachers' planning. This has led to more consistency in the way teachers set and share learning objectives with pupils. However, lessons do not always provide tasks that extend learning as the objectives set are not ambitious enough. The most effective teaching ensures that activities are adapted to the needs and abilities of all pupils, but this is not common practice across the school.

Despite improvements to the way letters and sounds (phonics) are taught, there remain inconsistencies in the quality of pupils' handwriting and spelling. Teachers plan topics that are usually practical and engaging which improves pupils' confidence to read, write and solve mathematics problems independently. However, the accuracy of pupils' writing varies across classes because lessons do not always provide sufficient time for pupils to correct their writing, and in mathematics, there are not always enough opportunities to apply their knowledge of number and calculation to solve more challenging problems.

Moderation exercises undertaken by the staff to assess pupils' work have sharpened the way pupils' progress is measured. Priorities in the school's development plan are being checked systematically and include specific targets to raise attainment. The governing body is increasing its influence by setting up committees that are linked more closely to staff with management responsibilities. As a result, the headteacher and governing body are in a stronger position to evaluate the performance of staff and pupils. The school improvement partner's monitoring has rightly placed at the forefront of the school's priorities its determination to improve achievement and establish more consistent teaching.

The local authority has provided satisfactory support since the school was given a Notice to Improve. The first statement of action has been revised following an evaluation by Ofsted. It now includes a clear statement setting out how the local authority will keep parents and carers informed of the school's progress, and sufficient detail regarding targets that the local authority can use to measure the impact of its support for the school in securing the necessary improvements to raising attainment and accelerating pupils' progress.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2009.

- Take the necessary actions and implement rigorous systems for health and safety and safeguarding to ensure statutory requirements are met.
- Raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - sharing best practice in teaching to eliminate inconsistencies with regard to the pace of lessons and the challenge provided to pupils
 - developing and monitoring curriculum planning to ensure key skills are reinforced in other subjects and the needs of different groups of pupils are met.
- Enhance the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - sharpening school development planning and monitoring systems to enable all leaders to acquire a clearer view of what they need to do to move the school forward at a faster pace
 - ensuring leaders at all levels are more deeply involved in monitoring and evaluating the impact of actions taken to improve attainment and progress.