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Ms Kaye Gilzene
Waterfield Primary School
Waterfield Gardens
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West Sussex
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Dear Ms Gilzene

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Waterfield Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 January, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, parents, governors and colleagues from the school as well as the local authority who contributed.

The school has experienced some changes since the last inspection. These have included the appointment of a new headteacher from January 2011.

As a result of the inspection on 15 and 16 October 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 has made inadequate progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The new headteacher has been involved with the school since September 2010, working alongside the acting headteacher and the local authority's locality link officer, before taking up the substantive post in January 2011. She has quickly gained a very clear idea of the school's strengths and priority areas for development and has already had a demonstrable impact. The increased involvement of the extended senior leadership team, as well as all other stakeholders within the school, is evident and beginning to pay dividends. Pupils have noticed the change, describing the new leadership of the school as 'fun, reasonable and fair'.



Although there has been satisfactory progress at building the capacity for making and sustaining improvements, the progress made in improving achievement overall and against the areas identified by the last inspection has been uneven. To some extent this has been because in the past, the school has tried to tackle too many aspects of its work without always evaluating the impact of work done to date. As a result, it has not made good use of evaluative information to consolidate improvements and inform next steps. This is evident in the work that the school still has to do to ensure that the use of assessment is of a consistently high quality and regularly informs effective teaching as well as accurate and challenging target setting.

Generally, attainment by the time pupils leave the school has remained below expectation since the last inspection and their progress overall has been significantly below average for the past three years. School data for this academic year indicate that pupils in Year 6 are more likely to achieve the school's targets but the pattern of progress across the school is still variable. While there is evidence of accelerated progress being made by some groups, the school has some way to go if it is to reach challenging targets across all year groups by the end of the school year. However, targets are now more closely scrutinised and monitored by senior leaders and increasingly good use is made of moderation to ensure that staff are more involved in the target setting process.

New systems for planning and evaluating progress in key subjects, including mathematics, are being introduced but these are at early stages of implementation. As a result, progress against two identified areas for improvement – ensuring all teachers use assessment more effectively to plan lessons, and ensuring key skills in mathematics are taught consistently well – has not been fast enough to impact upon pupil outcomes. The school is aware that progress against the areas identified with regard to raising attainment and improving progress in mathematics has not been as rapid as it would have liked. The senior leadership team has identified reasons for this which it is now addressing with vigour. It rightly judges that the school has been more successful in two other key areas: in raising the profile of mental oral work in mathematics, and in providing more opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills when solving problems. Positive work has been done to support teachers in improving their practice, and opportunities for staff to work with colleagues from other schools have enabled them to re-evaluate the impact of their teaching and begin to make well-focused improvements if necessary.

The school has recently begun an evaluation of its whole curriculum. This involves an audit of existing provision, including of the opportunities for pupils to use and practise numeracy skills within other subject areas. Pupils are contributing to this review and speak enthusiastically of ideas to make the curriculum more creative and exciting for them. However, this initiative is at too early a stage to have noticeable impact.

The governing body is clear about the changes that have been, and need to be, made. Governors have shown good resolve and their determination to 'move forward in leaps and bounds' is evident. As one governor said, 'The vision is much clearer, open and shared', and another, 'We had to have that foundation before we could move on'. The school has been well supported by the local authority and in particular by the involvement of the locality link officer during this time of transition.

The school has evident strengths in its sense of community and in a shared aim to widen opportunities for its families and their children. Two parents spoken to during the visit were very supportive of the school and of the staff, expressing the hope that the new headteacher would help staff to regain a 'smile and spring in their step'. This was aptly responded to by one teacher who summed up: 'We had lost our spring a little bit but it's coming back.'

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

Anne Duffy

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Accelerate progress and raise standards in mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2 by:
 - ensuring key skills in mathematics are taught consistently well throughout the school
 - raising the profile of mental oral work in mathematics to ensure all pupils know their tables and have basic mathematical skills, and can confidently and more quickly respond to quick fire questions
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills when solving problems.

- Ensure that the teaching of mathematics is of consistently good quality by:
 - ensuring all teachers use assessment more effectively to plan lessons that provide appropriate challenge, pace and expectation to all groups within the school, especially the more able
 - ensuring all teachers seize every opportunity to challenge and reinforce mathematical calculation and problem solving skills.

- Improve the opportunities throughout the school to use numeracy skills to enrich other subjects and areas of learning.