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Ms Angela Briggs
Headteacher
Dormers Wells Infant School
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Middlesex
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Dear Ms Briggs

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Dormers Wells Infant School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 15 February 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please thank the staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and local authority School Improvement Partner who gave their time to the discussions.

Since the previous inspection, there has been some restructuring at senior and middle leadership levels. For example, the roles of deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher are now class-based and the current post holders share a Year 2 class. The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage left last December and the vacant post has been very recently secured but will not commence until after Easter. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has gone down from above average at the previous inspection to broadly average now, with the biggest reduction in those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The majority of teachers, including middle leaders, were not in post at the time of the previous inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 19–20 May 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 satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.



Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was low in 2009. As a result of effective and concerted action, the school was successful in reversing this trend in 2010 so that, by the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment in reading and mathematics was broadly average. Pupils in the current Year 2 are on track to sustain this performance. Attainment in writing, although low, has been rising steadily over the past two years. Key initiatives such as writing portfolios and 'talk for writing' have raised the profile of writing for a purpose, with the desired impact on pupils' attainment. Given that children enter the school with knowledge and skills below expected levels for their age, pupils' achievement by the end of Year 2 is satisfactory.

The school is successfully accelerating pupils' progress in reading and mathematics through well-planned and focused interventions. These are helping to ensure that pupils make up lost ground in their learning due to past weaknesses and inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. However, pupils' progress in writing is comparatively slower, and the school is working hard to redress this unbalance. As a result, there has been a steady increase in the proportion of pupils throughout the school now working at age-related levels. Along with an improved quality of teaching, these interventions are contributing to the overall satisfactory progress made by pupils throughout the school.

Teachers make satisfactory use of assessment information to plan the next steps in pupils' learning. Their planning shows different ability levels at which groups are currently working and sets out activities accordingly. For example, Year 1 pupils made satisfactory progress on an appropriate numeracy task involving identifying the coordinates for recognisable structures such as a house, church and library. Children in Reception enjoyed exploring the qualities of a range of materials for building, in line with the building theme that the school was focusing on this week. Although planning now makes provision for the more-able pupils, these pupils do not always get the opportunity to make stronger progress in lessons by evaluating their own progress against clear criteria. Marking in Reception is often effective in giving children next steps guidance on how to improve. The school recognises that this important aspect of assessment is an area to develop further in Years 1 and 2.

The headteacher has responded well to the need to develop the monitoring and evaluation role of middle leaders. There has been a legacy of recruitment difficulties, especially in filling key middle leadership posts. Most key appointments are now in place, although the school recognises that the changes introduced need time to bed down. The literacy and numeracy curriculum leaders now work closely with senior leaders to conduct focused lesson observations, analysis of school performance data and scrutiny of pupils' work. The outcomes of this self-evaluation are communicated to staff and inform the school's key priorities for further improvement.

Provision of an attendance officer by the local authority has had a positive impact on improving attendance which, although steadily rising, remains low. In addition, the local authority has been instrumental in brokering effective support for the school



through the Keys to Success City Challenge programme. Joint planning sessions coupled with team-teaching with teachers from an outstanding partner school have been a valuable source of ongoing professional development for teaching staff. Teaching assistants have also benefited from the very practical and focused nature of the support provided through this productive partnership. The consolidation of the skills base of teachers and teaching assistants has had a sound impact on raising pupils' attainment and progress, indicating a school that is moving forward securely.

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

Nasim Butt
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Ensure that teaching takes more account of tracking data to consistently challenge pupils to achieve as well as they can, particularly the more able.
- Develop the role of subject coordinators in monitoring the quality of teaching and standards in their areas of responsibility.

