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20 October 2010

Mr S Harris
Headteacher
Rakegate Primary School
Rakegate Close
Wolverhampton
WV10 6US

Dear Mr Harris

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Rakegate Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 19 October 2010 and for the information provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, the staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and the local authority representative for their help during the visit.

Since the school's last inspection, there have been some significant personnel changes. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader retired at the end of the summer term and a new post-holder started in September 2010. A newly qualified teacher also joined the school at the start of the autumn term. One teacher is currently on maternity leave and another on long-term absence. A supply teacher has been appointed to cover the maternity leave. As a temporary solution, the deputy headteacher and a high-level teaching assistant have taken over responsibility for the class until the end of term, covering for the absent member of staff. A new Chair of the Governing Body has been elected and an extra committee, the evaluation group, has been created to monitor the school's progress against the priorities identified in the previous inspection report. During the monitoring inspection one teacher was absent.

As a result of the inspection in June 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex at the end of 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 classrooms provide spacious and well-organised learning environments. A large majority of the lessons seen were satisfactory or better. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress, although in the best lessons the pace of learning increases

significantly. This is because in these lessons, teachers have planned activities that meet pupils' individual needs extremely well. Lessons are fast paced and the teachers have high expectations of what the pupils will learn. In an excellent literacy lesson for pupils in mixed age groups who were set by ability, the teacher very skilfully enabled pupils to use their developing knowledge of phonics to sound out the correct pronunciation of new words, thereby extending their vocabulary. For all lessons, teachers identify learning objectives in their planning and share them with the pupils to help them understand the purpose of each lesson. However, insufficient emphasis has been given to focusing objectives on the intended learning, rather than just simply describing the planned activities, and this is why too many lessons still feature limited pace and challenge.

Teachers' planning now takes appropriate account of the needs of different groups, including those who speak English as an additional language and the most able pupils. The school's tracking system provides detailed information about the progress made by individuals and groups of pupils. Further staff training has been organised to enable teachers to make full use of this information to plan activities that more accurately meet pupils' needs.

The school's unvalidated 2010 data show that pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has risen, and is now broadly in line with the national average. Pupils' attainment in other year groups is variable, and in Year 2 it is significantly below average. Action has been taken to improve the effectiveness of teaching and so enable pupils to make faster progress across each year. The school's leaders have an accurate understanding of teaching strengths and weaknesses. Working with the local authority, targeted support has been provided to strengthen the quality of teaching. As yet, senior leaders are not monitoring the quality of lessons frequently enough to ensure that the intended benefits arising from professional development activities are being implemented successfully into everyday classroom practice.

The school's senior leaders work together well in providing strategic leadership for future development. The school's improvement plan sets out the key priorities to drive up standards. In response to the previous inspection report, greater attention has been paid to identifying quantifiable targets for the actions specified. These provide a useful basis to monitor and evaluate progress being achieved.

The governing body, working with the local authority and the school, has taken action to ensure that the statutory requirements identified in the previous inspection report are now met. The school has plans to evaluate their impact in due course, as they begin to bed in. The school is aware that it has not addressed the requirement to publish its school profile on an annual basis.

The local authority's statement of action meets all the requirements and provides a well thought out programme to support the school's development. The authority's consultants and advisers have played a key role in strengthening the school's capacity to improve.

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

Ken Buxton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2010

- Secure better learning and progress for pupils and increase the proportion of good teaching by:
 - making more effective use of learning objectives that focus on pupils' progress in individual lessons
 - ensuring that planning meets the needs of all groups of pupils, and in particular those who speak English as an additional language and the more able
 - ensure that the specific linguistic needs of all pupils who speak English as an additional language are met by providing relevant training for all staff.

- To improve the effectiveness of the school's work, leaders and managers should:
 - determine the progress made by different groups to inform effective support and intervention
 - be more systematic in following up weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment within challenging timescales
 - in all strategic planning, add specific, quantifiable and timed targets, so that progress towards them is measurable and can be reported accurately
 - ensure that the school meets all of its statutory duties by the end of the autumn term 2010 in regard to health and safety, community cohesion and in promoting equality of opportunity for all.