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Mr Richard Bullard
Combe Down CofE Primary School
Church Road
Combe Down
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BA2 5JQ

Dear Mr Bullard

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Combe Down CofE Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 9 December 2010 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to pupils, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, your School Improvement Partner and the senior secondary adviser who gave up their time to talk to me.

Since the last inspection, the deputy headteacher has left. An interim deputy headteacher was appointed from within the authority for two terms. The school has not yet appointed a substantive replacement, so from January 2011, a new interim deputy, from within the staff, will take up post until the end of the school year. There have, in addition, been changes to the senior management team. The school has also appointed a business manager who has taken over a significant amount of administrative work from the headteacher.

As a result of the inspection on 6 July 2010, 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.

Results for Key Stage 2 in 2010 show that the school has maintained the pattern of above average attainment. There were also some areas of improvement over the previous year. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls and a larger proportion of pupils reached the higher levels of attainment in mathematics. However, performance in mathematics remains below that in English. The attainment on entry, for this year group of pupils who were in Year 6 in 2010,

was above average and their progress was therefore satisfactory. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2010 showed a significant increase over attainment in 2009.

There has been an improvement in the level of consistency in the quality of teaching. Relationships and teachers' management of behaviour and classroom activity remain strong. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they use it to good effect to challenge pupils with probing questions. Teachers plan for a good balance of whole-class and group work and use information and communication technology effectively to support presentation and practice. Teaching assistants are well informed about the needs of the pupils with whom they work. Pupils engage enthusiastically with their learning. They work well collaboratively and behave well when working independently. They talk easily and happily about what they are learning.

Marking has improved recently and pupils receive good guidance in their books on what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Pupils know their targets. There is some good self-assessment by pupils, but this is not yet a consistently strong area. Teachers are making better use of assessment information to plan their lessons. The use of strategies to check pupils' understanding during lessons, however, is still variable. There is some lack of clarity in the way teachers set their learning objectives. These are sometimes expressed more as tasks to be completed rather than skills to be achieved.

Senior leaders have set up an effective system to monitor teaching and learning. Joint observations with the school improvement partner and by the headteacher and his interim deputy have ensured that judgements are moderated. The level of feedback to teachers is detailed and picks up well on strengths and areas for development in their teaching. However, there is an insufficiently consistent focus on the learning and progress of groups of pupils. Areas for improvement are beginning to be identified but it is too early yet to see the impact on teachers' practice as this programme is in its early stages of implementation.

Under the direction of the interim deputy headteacher, the school has set up better systems to track pupils' progress and then use that tracking data to analyse how individual pupils are progressing. The analysis at class teacher level has created a greater sense of accountability and has facilitated discussions about individual pupils and their needs. The systems have been efficiently implemented, and teachers have been well supported and are growing in confidence in their use of data analysis. These monitoring systems have served the purpose of opening up debate and helping teachers feel that they are not operating alone but are part of a coherent whole-school approach. The systems are, however, relatively new and have not yet had time to become embedded, neither has there been time for the management of these systems to become part of the remit of middle managers. This is the next planned step for the development of leadership and management at the school. Development planning is focused appropriately on the key areas for improvement

but success criteria are not always sufficiently easy to measure. It is not always clear how the impact of planned actions is to be monitored and evidenced.

The school has ensured that procedures for safeguarding pupils comply fully with current government requirements by ensuring compliance in the staff recruitment process. Systems are regularly and carefully reviewed and records have the appropriate amount of detail and are well kept.

The local authority statement of action meets requirements. Its precise and timetabled targets have provided the school with a good framework for moving forward. The school has made good use of the regular support provided by the local authority and there has been a good working relationship to address the issues for improvement arising for the previous inspection.

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 Looney
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Ensure procedures for safeguarding pupils comply fully with current government requirements by ensuring compliance in the staff recruitment process.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school by July 2011, so that the majority of it is good or better by:
 - making effective use of assessment to plan consistently challenging work for all groups of pupils
 - ensuring that teaching strategies and resources maximise learning opportunities for each pupil in every lesson
 - assessing pupils' work within lessons in order to adapt teaching to the pupils' needs as the lesson progresses
 - providing clear guidance to all pupils so that they know how to improve their work, through setting clearly understood targets and by ensuring marking indicates what pupils need to learn next.
- Improve leadership, management and governance of the school by the end of July 2011 by:
 - ensuring all leaders pursue improvement relentlessly and rigorously by systematically monitoring all aspects of the work of the school and developing and implementing improvement programmes.