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Mrs M Marlow
Headteacher
Willowbrook School
Summer Lane
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Exeter
Devon
EX4 8NN

Dear Mrs Marlow

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Willowbrook School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 3 February 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Will you please convey my thanks to the pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and staff who met with me during the visit.

The school appointed two new Year 4 and Year 6 teachers in September 2009, a Year 5 teacher in September 2010 and a Reception teacher in January 2011.

During the visit pupils in Year 2 and Year 4 were out of the school on day trips to Exeter Quay and Woodbury village settlement. Inspectors scrutinised written outcomes but did not observe teaching and learning in these classes. The school's information and communication systems were out of action for the duration of the visit due to a virus affecting the software and internet server.

As a result of the inspection on 18–19 November 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:

good progress in making improvements

and

satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The school's test data for Year 6 pupils in 2010 show that attainment in English and mathematics improved on the 2009 figures. The proportion of pupils achieving at least the expected Level 4 increased in both subjects. Half of all pupils in Year 6 reached the higher Level 5 in mathematics. In contrast, the proportion reaching higher Level 5 in English was well below average. The 2010 results show that in English and mathematics all pupils in Year 6 made above expected rates of progress from their low starting points at the end of Key Stage 1. The school's latest assessments show that rates of progress across the school are improving but remain variable. From previously low levels of attainment Year 6 pupils are rapidly increasing their progress and are in line to reach the expected standards by the time they leave the school.

Pupils with special educational needs and those speaking English as an additional language make at least similar progress to their peers and in many cases better. This is because teachers are more closely matching work to their abilities and they receive additional support in lessons which is closely focused on their needs. The attainment of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved from the previous year in all areas. The proportion of children working at age appropriate levels is broadly in line with the national average although lower in language for communication and thinking and calculation. Pupils' overall attainment at Key Stage 1 declined in 2010 from previous years. This is because pupils' attainment in writing was below average and few pupils attained the higher Level 3 results.

School improvement planning is strongly focused on developing pupils' writing, speaking and listening skills and improving the quality of teaching. There are some clear emerging strengths in the quality of teaching. High quality teaching in Year 6 is consistently good or better and has rapidly raised the rates of progress and attainment for pupils. Pupils' progress is improving because teachers across the school are setting higher expectations and hold greater ambition for pupils. Pupils make good or better progress in lessons where daily assessments are used to set precise learning objectives for different groups of learners. Improvements in the sharing of assessment data and tracking information with teachers have helped to raise expectations.

Behaviour management is more consistent across the school and results in more positive attitudes to learning. In a small minority of lessons pupils' behaviour was disruptive because the school's behaviour policies were not adhered to. Pupils are quick to recognise the changes in behaviour across the school and report with conviction that behaviour has improved in lessons and in the playground. In lessons they responded confidently to questions and worked cooperatively in small groups or in pairs to discuss and refine their ideas.

The school's vision and direction are set by a determined and influential headteacher. Under her strong leadership, staff are confident to share ideas and

develop their practice. The school's senior leadership team have taken on new responsibilities this academic year in leading the Early Years Foundation Stage and in developing the school's use of assessments and pupil tracking procedures. The leadership of mathematics has recently been taken on by a member of the senior leadership team and a new subject leader for English was appointed in September 2009. These subject leaders have been provided with valuable support and advice from local authority advisors. The subject leader for physical education has developed partnerships with other schools to improve the range of activities available for pupils after school. Pupils spoke positively of the impact of these partnerships in improving their gymnastic skills. In adapting the structure of the senior management team the school has developed clearer roles and responsibilities for senior leaders. Leaders have made satisfactory progress in developing their skills and expertise. However, their roles in monitoring their areas of responsibility are less well defined and several of these changes in leadership have been too recent to provide clear evidence of their impact. Consequently the capacity of the leadership team to build on the progress already made is satisfactory.

The school has increasingly engaged parents and carers in the life of the school. Parents and carers recognise the staff's care for pupils and the support that the school provides for them. Good partnerships with a range of professional agencies, including health workers, family centre and children's centre staff, provide an integrated approach to support parents and remove barriers to their child's learning. One parent reported how the school has 'developed into a more positive learning place'.

The school has an accurate analysis of its strengths and weaknesses and uses this analysis to regularly review and modify its approach. The school's comprehensive development plan clearly details actions against key priorities and there is evidence of good impact in improvements to standards at Key Stage 2 and in the Early Years Foundation Stage. However the action plans do not currently provide a clear focus on the intended gains to pupils' writing standards and on raising standards at Key Stage 1. Similarly improvement planning for the Early Years Foundation Stage provides a range of actions but these do not clearly focus on raising children's attainment in language, communication and thinking and calculation.

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

Mark Lindfield

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve attainment for all pupils, particularly in writing.
- Raise the proportion of good or outstanding teaching in order to accelerate progress by:
 - setting higher expectations and being more ambitious for pupils, especially those who are more able
 - providing a stronger focus on the quality of individual pupils' learning
 - using assessment data more consistently in lesson planning to ensure that work meets individual pupils' needs
 - building on good and outstanding practice in the school.
- Extend the capacity of the leadership team to build on the progress already made, by improving the skills and expertise of leaders and managers at all levels and across all aspects of the school's work.