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21 January 2011

Mrs Helen Swainson  
Acting Headteacher  
Reckleford Community School and Children's Centre  
Eastland Road  
Yeovil  
Somerset  
BA21 4ET

Dear Mrs Swainson

**Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Reckleford Community School and Children's Centre**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 20 January 2011 and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the staff, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and the two members of the local authority, one of whom is also the School Improvement Partner, for making time to meet with me. I also appreciated greatly the opportunity to speak with pupils where possible during lessons and at lunchtime. The children's centre was not visited as part of this inspection.

The number of pupils has increased from 98 in May 2010 to 134; an additional class has been created as a result. The headteacher has been absent on long-term sick leave since the start of November 2010 and has just started a phased return to work. The school is being led by the senior teacher as acting headteacher with support from the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) and other staff.

As a result of the inspection on 12–13 May 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 inadequate progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Staff and governors are now taking the right actions to improve the school's overall effectiveness but these were started too slowly. Not enough was done from May to October 2010 because neither staff nor governors understood well enough at that time exactly what was required to speed up pupils' progress. From November 2010 the situation changed. The acting headteacher and SENCO have worked with staff to set out a programme of improvement that is already showing signs of success. Aspirations are high. Nevertheless, in view of the delayed start, provision and outcomes have not been enhanced as much as might be expected since last May.

Standards are beginning to rise. In 2010, test results at the end of Year 2 showed an improvement on those in previous years but were still below national averages overall and well below in writing. Attainment for pupils currently in Years 1 and 2 is generally below age-related expectations. There is still some way to go before most pupils in Year 2 reach them. Although progress is indeed being speeded up, this is not yet fast enough to meet the challenging targets set for 2011. Progress in writing is uneven over Years 1 and 2; in places it is satisfactory or better but, elsewhere, work in exercise books does not demonstrate sufficient gains over time, especially for some pupils in Year 1. The progress of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been enhanced since May and is clearly visible in lessons and also in the very well-kept learning diaries that show attainment through annotated records and photographs.

Pupils' behaviour is good. It is sensitively and unobtrusively managed by staff. Pupils are keen to learn and eager to please. They enjoy being at this school and feel secure. Good work is being done to improve attendance figures and trenchant action is taken where necessary so that parents and carers fully understand their responsibilities. Attendance needs to be better for some pupils, especially those who arrive late in the morning or whose families take holidays in school time.

The quality of teaching is improving. Some crucial work, such as that to check the accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' levels of attainment, is taking place now when it should have been addressed much sooner. Nevertheless, no shortcomings in teaching were seen during this monitoring visit and some teaching was good. Lesson planning is thorough and based on well-kept records of pupils' prior attainment. Teachers' interactions with pupils are warm and encouraging and their questioning suitably challenging so as to assess at least soundly what pupils are learning. Classrooms are bright and inviting. Teachers and teaching assistants work in good partnership. The school's own log of lesson observations shows that roughly two thirds of lessons are good or better and the rest generally satisfactory; more lessons need to be good or better in order to accelerate progress quickly for all pupils.

In the week of this visit, suitable changes to provision for literacy were implemented so as to match more closely the work set to pupils' needs. The needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are understood well and are being met. Pupils told the inspector

about all the different things they learn but some spoke of limited use of computers. Many opportunities exist to develop pupils' creativity. Teaching assistants and other support or administrative staff play important roles in many aspects of school life to the benefit of pupils. Care, guidance and support for pupils have some very good features. The support for pupils' social and emotional well-being is of high quality, as are the arrangements for safeguarding.

The local authority acted well to ensure that the school has been properly led and managed during the headteacher's absence and is continuing to keep the situation under review. Current arrangements for leadership and management are effective. The acting headteacher and SENCO have galvanised the staff into action. Staff are working with enthusiasm and clarity of purpose. Plans for improvement are good ones. Governance has improved greatly since November. Governors have strengthened their understanding of their roles and are keeping a check on the school's work and progress as they should. Scrutiny of pupils' work is undertaken by senior staff but more should now be gleaned from this activity about the rate of pupils' progress and whether it is enough. Data about pupils' attainment and progress are compiled thoroughly but systems for analysing them are rather cumbersome. Nevertheless, staff and governors have a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' achievements and how to improve them.

External support is now good but the local authority did not ensure a prompt start on school improvement although work was undertaken from May to October with the headteacher. The statement of action written by the local authority required some improvement and this was done so that support is well organised through several sources and clearly recorded in helpful notes of visits. Senior staff value the support and challenge from the School Improvement Partner and the work of the consultant headteacher from a local successful school. Teachers speak of the benefit of visits from literacy and numeracy advisers. Governors praise greatly the work of the governor support and development adviser from the local authority.

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

**Wiola Hola**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010:**

- Increase the proportion of pupils attaining nationally expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2.
- Improve the overall quality of teaching and learning to good by using assessment information more effectively to better inform lesson planning in order to accelerate progress for all pupils.
- Ensure leaders and managers at all levels systematically and rigorously monitor and evaluate the rates of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching and learning.