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Mrs Fran Beckett
The Headteacher
Stakes Hill Infant School
Springwood Avenue
Waterlooville
Hampshire
PO7 8ED

Dear Mrs Beckett

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Stakes Hill Infant School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 1 March 2011 and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to your deputy and assistant headteacher, the chair of the governing body, the local authority district manager, your staff and the pupils.

Since the last inspection the school has appointed a new assistant headteacher who joined the school in January 2011. In October 2010 the staffing was revised in Year 1 to two full time teachers rather than job share positions.. The current headteacher will be retiring at the end of the summer term in July 2011.

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.

A pattern of declining attendance over the last four years has proven challenging for the school and, whilst many parents recognise why leaders are striving to raise whole school attendance, others do not. A small minority of parents does not acknowledge that poor attendance is severely affecting the progress and overall success of their children. The impact of a more stringent attendance policy, a new rewards system for 100% attendance both weekly and termly and the impact of new traffic lights cards are starting to encourage pupils and parents to commit to regular attendance and better punctuality. Attendance is rising as a result of new procedures and in the autumn term attendance was above average. It has fluctuated slightly in

the spring term because of illness. Vulnerable pupils with low attendance are well cared for and effective care, guidance and support by school staff and external agencies are helping reduce persistent absence. All staff recognise that continually driving up and sustaining attendance to a minimum of 95%, to improve outcomes for all pupils, remains the critical priority this year.

The previous inspection indicated that pupils' achievement was satisfactory and this remains so. Despite new approaches to the teaching of writing and reading, attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 fell in 2010 and results for reading and writing remained below the national average. Attainment in mathematics was broadly in line with that found nationally as was the percentage of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 in reading and mathematics. Senior leaders have taken swift action to further review the teaching of literacy and numeracy following the decline in attainment. The school's internal data show that pupils' progress is accelerating and the school is beginning to reverse the decline in attainment. The progress of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is often good and overall their achievement in 2010 exceeded that of their peers. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is variable and not as good as other pupils. The school has invested much time and resource in reviewing how best to support the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and current data show better progress than last year.

Levels of literacy and social and emotional development of pupils entering the Early Years Foundation Stage are below expectations for this age range. As result of increased work with phonics and better planning throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage into Year 1, most children are now making much faster progress from often very low starting points. However, senior leaders rightly accept that attainment in writing is low and for some children low levels of literacy remain a barrier to learning.

The regular monitoring of the quality of teaching, followed by focused staff development sessions led by senior leaders, partners from the local authority and external consultants, helps staff review what characterises good learning. The proportion of good teaching is increasing and good behaviour is seen in most lessons. Probing questioning is used very well, helping pupils develop greater capacity for listening and speaking with confidence. Effective use of targeted questions to less-able, quiet and more-able pupils ensures that classrooms are highly inclusive of different learning needs. During the inspection, good learning was seen in lessons where pace was brisk, pupils sustained their concentration through whole-class, pair and group work and many visual aids were used to stimulate discussion. Most teachers set high expectations of pupils, and the majority of pupils know their targets. The quality of marking is improving and pupils often receive comments linked to their targets so they know what to do to improve.

In lessons where learning is satisfactory, too much time is spent listening to the teacher and pace slows. Planning does not take sufficient account of pupils' progress

and more-able pupils do not receive extension work or greater challenge which stretches their ability. Teachers do not scaffold learning sufficiently well so some less-able pupils struggle to understand how to take small steps to achieve the work set. Teachers' planning shows some use of assessment data to plan learning that is matched to pupils' levels of ability, but this is often through outcomes rather than resources, pace or different tasks for pupil groups.

The local authority knows the school well and has helped leaders focus on strategic as well as daily priorities, such as improving the quality of teaching, use of assessment data for tracking pupils' progress and raising attendance. Effective leadership of the school, coupled with good use of support from local authority advisers, the School Improvement Partner and the district manager, has ensured that improvements made so far are well planned and sustainable in raising achievement. The school has responded well to the opportunities to link with other local schools to review ideas for teaching and securing better attendance. The local authority's statement of action is carefully sequenced so that success criteria and milestones are realistic, challenging and reviewed on a regular basis. In addition, audits of the teaching of English and mathematics have successfully helped leaders identify how to revise the curriculum to meet pupils' needs and help staff explore new ways of teaching literacy and numeracy.

The governing body has not held the school to account for low standards and low attendance over several years. Recently, the capacity of the governing body has increased. Minutes of governing body meetings since September 2010 show more challenging debate with leaders. The governing body now has a much clearer understanding of how the school is improving and which areas require further development.

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

Joanna Beckford-Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise pupils' attainment so that a greater proportion of pupils reach or exceed the nationally expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improve planning and procedures for promoting good attendance so that pupils' attendance increases and is close to the national average by July 2011.