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Ms Newton
Headteacher
King Athelstan Primary School
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Dear Ms Newton

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of King Athelstan Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 4 May 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to your staff, the representative from the local authority and the pupils and staff who made time to meet me during the day.

Since the last inspection there have been some significant changes to teaching and support staff. These include the appointment of five new class teachers and a new assistant headteacher. Some of these appointments are temporary.

As a result of the inspection on 16 and 17 September 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.

Children continue to enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills well below the levels expected for their age. As they move through Nursery and Reception, children make satisfactory progress overall with some making good progress, for example in their disposition and attitudes. A new Early Years Foundation Stage leader has been in post for a matter of days, but has already identified areas that require further development. These include developing a more robust assessment process where children have greater opportunities to apply the skills learned during adult-led sessions in their own activities. The school is also considering how to further develop the use of the outdoor environment.

The percentage of pupils leaving and joining the school at various points in the school year is higher than the national average. This is particularly the case in the current Year 5 class. This, combined with several changes in class teachers, has had a detrimental impact on the pace of improving attainment in this year group. However, despite this disruption to learning, many pupils within this year group have made satisfactory progress with significant numbers making good progress in writing and mathematics. The school has appropriate plans in place to address these inconsistencies to ensure that all pupils make rapid progress.

The schools current data in Year 2 indicate that despite significant improvements in pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics, it is still low at this point in the year. In Year 6 their attainment also remains low in English although the percentage of pupils already achieving national expectations has improved in comparison to last year and is on track to increase further in English. This improved trend in attainment, combined with a growing number of pupils making good progress, indicates that achievement is improving.

Pupils have started to make good progress in all year groups despite some inconsistencies still remaining. A significant number of pupils in Years 3 and 6 make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In Year 6 additional intervention programmes in literacy and numeracy and the introduction of an extra teaching class have resulted in many pupils making accelerated progress in this year group. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language are also beginning to make better progress, however the pattern of progress for these pupils is still inconsistent in some year groups and subjects.

This accelerated progress in English and in particular writing is evident in pupils' books where pupils are now beginning to write extended pieces of work. This improvement in writing has been well supported by a new marking policy along with the introduction of WILF (What I'm looking for) targets. This has provided pupils with a greater understanding of how well they are achieving and what their next steps to learning are. Teachers' marking in literacy is detailed and consistent throughout the school. It indicates what pupils have achieved and how to improve their work. As one child stated, 'The marking really helps me because the teacher tells me two things that I have done well and one thing that I need to improve, and I get a chance to write a comment back!' This greater focus on writing and marking has resulted in improved outcomes for pupils in this area. Writing opportunities within literacy have increased and the school is now working towards providing pupils with a more systematic and meaningful context in which to further develop their writing, particularly through their themed work.

In well-taught lessons, planning clearly indicates the needs of different groups within each class. Consequently the tasks set for pupils provide the appropriate challenge to enable many individuals to make good progress in lessons. This along with good behaviour, effective adult support and precise teacher questioning, ensures that pupils are enthused and eager to learn. However this good practice is not fully

embedded across the whole school and in some lessons pupils are not always sufficiently challenged to achieve their best. In those cases the work set is not always appropriate and on occasions the pace of learning is slow. Teaching assistants are not always used effectively during the introduction to lessons. Consequently pupils' progress in such sessions is less effective.

Assessment procedures have been refined since the last inspection. The school tracking document is now accurate as a result of various moderation activities where staff, along with the support of the local authority, have reassessed pupils' work. This ensures that marking and assessments of pupils' work are now consistent and accurate across the school in literacy and numeracy. More detailed systems for reporting on pupils' progress have helped towards improving outcomes for individuals.

The headteacher, along with the senior leadership team, has provided strong guidance in ensuring that subject leader roles have been clarified, and as a result greater accountability among leaders has been established. The literacy leaders have also been provided with personalised training and support from the local authority to enable them to better identify the progress that pupils make as they move through the school. Subject leaders now provide progress reports to the governing body and are engaged in a range of monitoring activities such as learning walks, book scrutiny, joint lesson observations and the analysis of pupils' data. As a result of these changes subject leaders now feel empowered to fulfil their roles and have a greater involvement in whole school decisions.

Pupils talk about improvements in behaviour and how very much they enjoy coming to school and feel safe. Attendance is currently broadly average but the school recognises that it has been low in the past. The improved trend in attendance is also reflected in the reduction of the number of persistent absences.

The local authority's statement of action was fit for purpose and has supported the school well in addressing the issues identified in the last inspection. The remaining challenge for the school is to further accelerate progress so that attainment continues to rise rapidly and to ensure that teaching is consistently good in order to make up for past inadequacies.

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

Susan Gadd

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve pupils' attainment in English, particularly in writing, throughout the school by:
 - strengthening the subject management of English to ensure that subject leaders understand and use all available guidance to raise attainment
 - ensuring that pupils have as many opportunities as possible to practise fluency in writing in a range of subjects.

- Ensure that all teaching and learning are good or better by:
 - ensuring that the needs of all pupils are consistently met effectively in lessons
 - planning activities that will challenge all pupils to achieve their best.

- Improve the consistency and quality of assessment, especially marking, to ensure that all pupils understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.