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Ms Audrey Chamberlain
Headteacher
Woodside School
Halt Robin Road
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Kent
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Dear Ms Chamberlain

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Woodside School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 8 June 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, the members of the governing body and to the officers of the local authority for meeting with me.

Since the last inspection two teachers have resigned. Two teachers have been appointed with a third on a temporary contract to cover maternity leave.

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

Senior leaders have put in place effective systems for checking the levels at which pupils are working in English and mathematics. They have used this information, as well as evidence from annual reviews, to set academic and personal targets that are challenging. Evidence shows a trend of improvement with more pupils on track to make better progress although there is some variation in key stages and, due to the legacy of underachievement, older pupils have more ground to make up. Individual interventions are now in place to address particular needs in literacy or to address specific learning difficulties. These are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement. In the majority of lessons observed pupils were attentive and diligent. They settled to work quickly and, with sensitive additional adult support, remained on task.

Frequent observations carried out by external consultants, the local authority and senior managers give strong evidence that there have been improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and equality of opportunity for pupils. Classrooms are managed appropriately with lessons planned in detail to ensure that activities and resources are available so that little time is lost and lessons proceed at an appropriate pace with interesting activities. Relationships are positive and praise is used effectively to encourage pupils. In the best lessons teachers are using their improved assessments, targets and knowledge of pupils to design activities that are well matched to individuals or small groups with explicit learning intentions. In these lessons pupils are very clear what they have to do to succeed and are effectively challenged to think and apply their skills. Additional adults know what they need to do to support effective learning. This is not yet consistent. In too many lessons, even though teachers know pupils well and additional support helps individuals complete tasks so that they achieve some success, there is a lack of precision in what pupils are expected to learn in the lessons or by doing a particular activity. This means that pupils are not challenged enough to ensure they reach their particular targets, learn new skills, acquire new knowledge or address their own, particular misconceptions or barriers to learning.

The school has clarified its procedures related to marking and feedback to pupils and is rightly keeping these under regular review to ensure that they remain suitable for Woodside pupils. At the moment, there remains some inconsistency in practice and, where written feedback is appropriate for pupils, it is not yet always effective in leading to improved learning.

Changes in the curriculum, to the deployment and training of staff and to the environment have all led to Woodside improving as a place of learning. Clear routines that are regularly monitored and evaluated ensure that pupils feel safe and remain calm. The school's own data and the pupils themselves describe how behaviour is better. The school, its governing body and the local authority have worked closely together to consider the future of the current site and proposals are about to be discussed by local councillors. In the meantime, there have been significant improvements to improve safety. These have included creating a new reception area and point of entry to the school, installing electronic key fobs for different buildings and removing potential hazards or fencing particular areas. The environment has also been enhanced by a new playground which pupils clearly enjoy and are excited by. Additional training for staff, for example in basic skills, and the re-establishment of subject leadership and specialist teachers have led to improved subject knowledge in lessons and better progression and coverage in the curriculum. Appropriate plans for the next academic year are in place to ensure greater coherence and further opportunities for pupils to gain accredited courses.

The school's specialist status in physical education continues to contribute well to the life of the school and is effective in providing additional opportunities for pupils to participate in a wide variety of sporting opportunities both on site and off site. This

leads to pupils' obvious enthusiasm for sport as can be seen in their energetic play on the multi-use games area or in learning new skills, for example skateboarding or scooting.

The strong strategic leadership from the headteacher has been a key driver in bringing about many of the improvements. The senior leadership team has clearly grown in confidence and leads its areas of responsibility confidently. It is accurate in evaluating the quality of teaching and identifying points for improvement. It has appropriately recognised that support now needs to be tailored even more to the needs of individual or groups of teachers. This will include a continued focus on the steps needed to improve learning and improvement targets that require consistent follow up.

The local authority has provided effective support for the school through advisers and consultants and the provision of additional finances. The statement of action meets requirements. The local authority, with the governing body, has been rigorous in its ongoing monitoring and appropriate challenge to the school. Woodside is forming effective partnerships to support ongoing improvements to provision and better support for some of its most vulnerable pupils.

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

Stephen McShane
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve pupils' progress and equality of opportunity by:
 - ensuring that all targets, both academic and personal, are suitably challenging and keeping expectations suitably high in all lessons
 - maximising the use of learning time throughout the day
 - ensuring staff consistently provide written and verbal feedback that is accurate, praises real success and helps pupils to know how to improve
 - ensuring all staff are given precise feedback, following lesson observations that focus on the outcomes for pupils, so that they understand how to improve the learning opportunities for pupils.
- Establish schemes of work that assist teachers to match work accurately to pupils' different levels of ability across all subjects and that provide the support required if teachers are teaching outside their areas of expertise.
- Build on improvements made over the last year in day-to-day routines and supervision.
- As a matter of urgency work with the local authority to improve the suitability of the site so that pupils' learning is not impeded.