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Mrs Lydia Lastowiecki
Headteacher
Stanton Road
Nottingham
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Dear Mrs Lastowiecki

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Sandiacre Cloudside Junior School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Tuesday 21 June, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the staff, as well as the representative of the governing body with whom I spoke, for their time and courtesy. I would also like to thank the pupils for the enjoyable time I spent talking with them.

Since the school's last inspection, there have been no significant contextual changes.

As a result of the inspection on 23 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.

Since the previous inspection, progress has accelerated throughout the school. The headteacher's drive and ambition to provide the best possible learning experiences and promote high expectations has been key to increasing levels of progress and the subsequent upturn in pupils' attainment. The monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous and has led to important improvements being made which are accelerating the progress pupils make through the school. School assessment information for pupils in Year 6 shows that attainment has improved and is broadly average in English and mathematics. This represents an emerging trend of broadly average attainment over the past two years and a rise from the previous three years, where attainment had been significantly lower than national averages. However, the proportion of pupils who reach the higher Level 5 in both English and mathematics remains low. Lessons observed jointly with senior leaders confirm that all pupils are making at least satisfactory progress, with many making good, accelerated progress.

The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. The school's monitoring indicates that teaching is at least satisfactory with over half of lessons good or better. All lessons have good features. Teaching is well focused on what pupils with different abilities should achieve. There are good strategies for engaging the pupils and for developing their independent learning skills. Assessment information is beginning to be used effectively to inform planning and track the pupils' progress. Teachers are making good use of short-term targets to guide the pupils' improvement. The best teaching is well paced, sharply focused and builds well on the pupils' prior learning. In these lessons there is a good balance of teacher input and independent activities. The understanding of more-able pupils is skilfully assessed and promoted through effective questioning. Teaching assistants are well informed and understand what different pupils should achieve. The school is aware of the need to develop greater consistency in planning. The school has also correctly identified that a review of the marking policy should be carried out next term.

All staff have received training on problem solving, with a focus on linking problem solving to information and communication technology (ICT) and as a strategy for extending more-able pupils. As a result, staff are developing greater confidence in teaching problem solving and have access to improved resources. A number of initiatives have been introduced to develop greater opportunities for extended writing and purposeful writing. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, pupils were developing their persuasive writing skills by writing letters to pupils in Year 2, whom they will buddy in September.

The governing body has worked hard to develop its role since the last inspection. Governors are regular visitors to school and are playing a more active role in all aspects of school life. The governing body has welcomed the good support and training received from the local authority (LA) in developing its monitoring and evaluation role. It is now becoming more involved in the ongoing evaluation of the school's work and is developing a clearer understanding of what needs to be done to secure the necessary improvements. Consequently, it is developing greater confidence in holding leaders to account.

The LA's statement of action meets requirements and correctly identifies the priorities required for school improvement. The school appreciates the good support provided by the LA, particularly the challenge and guidance of the School Improvement Partner.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Accelerate rates of progress by:
 - improving the quality of teaching so that at least 65% of teaching is good or better by July 2011
 - using assessment information to plan lessons that meet the individual needs of pupils, particularly the most able
 - using questioning more effectively to probe pupils' understanding, particularly the most able
 - increasing the pace of learning, ensuring that all pupils have the opportunity to contribute and develop independence.

- Raise attainment in mathematics and English, particularly that of the most able, by:
 - providing opportunities for pupils to apply their understanding to problem solving
 - providing increased opportunities for pupils to write for a purpose and to produce pieces of extended writing.

- Develop the role of the governing body by:
 - providing opportunities for its members to gain first-hand experience of the work of the school by visiting classrooms and working closely with curriculum coordinators
 - developing their monitoring and evaluation role to involve them more closely in strategic planning and enable them to effectively support and challenge the school's leaders.