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14 July 2011

Mrs Kate Beaumont  
Headteacher  
Windhill Primary and Nursery School  
Windhill  
Bishop's Stortford  
CM23 2NE

Dear Mrs K Beaumont

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Windhill Primary and Nursery School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 July 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Can you also convey my thanks to the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, the school improvement partner and to the pupils I spoke to.

The current headteacher's appointment was confirmed in June 2011; a new deputy headteacher will take up her post in September. From September the school leadership team will consist of the new headteacher, a new deputy headteacher an Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 leader and the school business manager. Eight members of the teaching staff have left since the last inspection and there has been nine newly appointed staff during this period.

As a result of the inspection on 16 to 17 November 2009, 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 has made:

good progress in making improvements.

*and*

good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.



The school's performance in 2010 demonstrates a marked improvement on the previous two years. The proportion of pupils attaining English at Level 4 or above was in line with national expectations and pupils who attained Level 4 or above in mathematics was significantly above the national average. The current unvalidated data for 2011 show that the school has further improved on this performance as the SATs results indicate that pupils' attainment is above the national average in both subjects. The number of pupils achieving high grades has improved significantly. The school's data suggest that there is improved and accelerated performance of most year groups. The use of pupils' learning partners is working well in lessons seen. They have many good opportunities to discuss their understanding of their learning objectives and to comment on their performance in their books. Where pupils' learning is good, they had frequent opportunities to make contributions to their lessons. The challenge of the learning tasks in these lessons increased their enthusiasm and willingness to work quickly.

Overall, pupils behave well and are supportive of each other. Their attendance is low although improving significantly since the start of January 2011. Pupils are appreciative of the additional extra-curricular opportunities, including more sports at lunchtime. They welcome the additional responsibility such as the new appointments of a head and deputy head boy and girl and how these roles help them to convey their views about the school. The pupil headship roles contribute well to the work of the school for example they help towards organising and delivering assemblies.

The quality of lessons is improving. In the stronger lessons, effective questioning, fast pace and the rigorous assessment of pupils' progress by teachers enable pupils to learn well. In a Year 2 class, pupils were asked to recall their experience of their trip to the seaside in order to build a piece of creative writing. Some pupils used high level evaluative skills to identify alliteration and the use of adjectives to answer questions. The use of information communication technology doesn't always enhance pupils' learning. The use of teaching assistants in some lessons provides good personalised support to enable pupils to learn well. However, not all teaching assistants support pupils effectively.

The school's priority of developing opportunities for pupils to write has resulted in increased opportunities in the curriculum for writing. The learning partners are working well to strengthen the school's approach of 'talk for writing'. Literacy and numeracy lessons are taught daily and this strategy is having a good impact on raising attainment in both English and mathematics. Pupils welcomed the interesting topics covered in their personal, social and health education lessons. The senior leadership team support teachers planning to build on the developing creative curriculum, but there is a recognition by leaders that a complete overview of how basic skills is being delivered across the school is required in order for some of the good work to be further developed.

There are many good strategies including support from external agencies that has brought about the improvement in attendance. The result of a high level of pupils' illnesses over the winter term had a significantly negative impact on the overall attendance for the year. The effective strategy of phoning parents is now having a good impact on raising attendance levels. Although the level of attendance remains low, there has been considerable progress in closing the gap between the school and national rates.

The new headteacher and the leadership team have made good decisions as to how the school's work should be prioritised. Attendance has been a pivotal focus and the creation of the parents' forum earlier this year has enabled the leaders to work more closely with parents to develop measures that are bringing about improvement. The raising attainment plan and the school's self-evaluation are accurately identifying what the school needs to do next to build on their recent good achievements. The governing body has reorganised its committees to provide an increased level of scrutiny of the school's work. More precise monitoring has enabled members of the governing body to understand the key priorities for the school and support the school to improve pupils' attendance and achievement at all levels.

The incisive monitoring and support from the school improvement partner has enabled the school to gain a full understanding of how well the measures taken to improve outcomes have impacted on pupils' attainment.

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

Samantha Morgan-Price  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2009**

- Improve attendance and by July 2010 meet local authority targets by strengthening the partnership with those parents whose children do not attend often enough, and sharing termly attendance information with them.
- Accelerate progress and raise attainment in English and mathematics, particularly for the more able by:
  - Including a wider range of challenging activities when planning for cross-curricular themes and subjects.
  - Providing more opportunities to write for different purposes from the time pupils join school.
  - Planning more opportunities for pupils' to practise and apply basic mathematical skills in a range of contexts.
  - Strengthen the monitoring role of governors so that they are more rigorous in holding leaders to account for tackling weaknesses and improving outcomes.