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Mr P Mulligan
The Headteacher
Pilton the Bluecoat Church of England Junior School
Abbey Road
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Devon
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Dear Mr. Mulligan

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Pilton the Bluecoat Church of England Junior School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 July 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 23 September 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on roll has remained steady. There have been some changes to the teaching team, including the appointment of a newly qualified teacher. Further appointments have also been made to ensure further teaching assistants are assigned to each year group.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

In 2010, attainment at the end of Year 6 remained broadly in line with national averages in both English and mathematics, a picture similar to that seen at the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils making two levels of progress during their time in school was below average. The position has improved in 2011. Rates of progress in reading and mathematics are good. Unvalidated test results and teacher assessments show attainment is above national averages in these subject areas. Whilst the proportion of pupils exceeding nationally expected attainment levels has increased by ten percentage points in mathematics, it has not for English. This is because, although girls are doing well in Years 5 and 6, too few boys are reaching either the age-expected or higher levels in writing. The adaptations made to the



English curriculum are beginning to have a positive impact on their achievement. The school acknowledges that initial strategies to develop the teaching of writing were not matched closely enough to pupils' needs and so approaches were changed. Less confident boys have been given access to a more practical, enquiry-based curriculum. This provides them with more engaging and relevant writing opportunities, often emanating from exciting trips. Teachers explain to pupils how to write successfully in a given style so that they can use this advice to both compose and to check their scripts together. The local authority, recognising that attainment in writing was falling, put in place some effective short term advisory support to the school. A literacy consultant has worked closely alongside teachers to show how adult-led guided group work can help teachers accelerate the progress for specific groups of pupils, including boys and the more able. These changes are already having a beneficial impact on all pupils' attitudes to writing. School data indicate that the proportion of pupils exceeding expected attainment levels in English has increased markedly in Years 3 and 4.

Whilst the quality of teaching is improving and often good, less effective practice remains. Where teaching is active and stimulating, pupils enjoy their lessons and join in enthusiastically. For example, one class had a visit from a police sergeant who requested that the pupils file 'eye-witness accounts' about a missing leopard in relation to their study of the book called 'Stig of the Dump'. Pupils have good opportunities in such lessons to rehearse their thinking orally in pairs and groups before commencing formal work. Work is well matched to the full range of abilities, including for the more able. Pupils are clear that the constructive advice in their books is helping them know how well they are progressing and how to make changes to improve the next piece of work. However, where teaching is less effective, the areas for improvement from the previous inspection are not consistently addressed. Written advice in pupils' books is less apparent and classroom displays do not maximise opportunities to celebrate and aid pupils' learning. Such lessons lack pace and opportunities are missed to engage pupils in their own learning through group dialogue and exciting activities.

There has been a strong emphasis by senior leaders upon developing the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. Lesson observations have been conducted regularly and the evaluations made are well judged and helpful to teachers. Similarly, the headteacher has raised awareness among staff of the expectations set for pupil achievement. Approaches to assessment and the systems for tracking pupils' progress have been enhanced. The information has led to challenging, but achievable, targets being set for pupils' attainment. The school has a more accurate and realistic evaluation of its own strengths and areas to improve, based upon firm evidence of pupil performance data. The governing body provides suitable challenge to senior leaders about the school's performance. In mathematics, a focus on helping pupils to problem solve and talk through their calculation strategies has had a positive impact on pupil attainment in 2011, which has risen markedly across all year groups. With writing, the school has been less incisive in its use of rigorous monitoring and analysis of the relative performance of groups of pupils, specifically



boys, girls, and the more able, to inform its improvement strategy. The school recognises the need to keep its strategies under continual review and is using direct evidence of their impact on teaching and learning more precisely to inform its decisions. Given that achievement in writing is improving more quickly now in line with the gains seen in reading, mathematics and in the quality of teaching, the school is well placed to secure sustained improvement.

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

David Townsend

Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2009

- Ensure the quality of teaching is good or better in all classrooms by establishing consistent practice that:
 - matches work and activities closely to the full range of abilities, including those who are more able
 - provides clear and helpful feedback about next steps and how to improve
 - offers a stimulating classroom environment with prompts and displays to support learning
 - makes the best use of time and ensures a good pace throughout lessons.
- Increase by at least ten percentage points the proportion of pupils exceeding nationally expected standards in English and mathematics in all four year groups by the summer of 2011.
- Improve the effectiveness of self-evaluation by ensuring:
 - judgements are always rigorous and findings presented accurately and in relation to national expectations
 - the most recent performance data are considered when setting targets for pupils' progress.

