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16 September 2011

Miss Victoria Page
Headteacher
Langstone Infant School
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Dear Miss Page

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Langstone Infant School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 15 September 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to your staff, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, the representative from the local authority and the pupils who made time to meet me during the day.

Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to the leadership of the school. The substantive headteacher left at the end of May 2011 and an interim headteacher, from an outstanding junior school, was appointed for the remainder of the summer term. A new Chair and Vice Chair of Governors were also appointed at the end of the summer term 2011, along with two other governors. In September 2011, a new interim headteacher was appointed who leads the school for four days a week. On the remaining day, this responsibility is delegated to the deputy headteacher. In addition, a seconded deputy headteacher, from another school, has been working closely with the mathematics and literacy subject leaders. New leaders have also been appointed from within the school to take year group responsibilities. Two class teachers have left and one new teacher has joined the school. The inclusion leader now shares the responsibility for teaching a class.

As a result of the inspection on 17 and 18 January 2011, 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 inadequate progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The inspection has raised serious concerns. These will be considered by the appropriate Regional Director, Inspection Delivery, who will decide when the school will receive further inspection.

Despite the overall progress being inadequate since the last inspection, some progress has taken place within the school. Recently implemented communication strategies have greatly improved staff morale. Staff feel valued and an atmosphere of team work has emerged. There is a great desire amongst all staff to ensure that pupils achieve their best. Despite these good intentions, and improved teamwork, changes since the school's inspection have not always taken place in a timely manner. Consequently, progress has not occurred at a rapid enough pace to make up for past underachievement.

Children enter Reception with skills generally expected for their age and make accelerated progress. Pupil progress in Key Stage 1 is difficult to ascertain from the school's own data as previous assessments have not always been accurate, particularly in mathematics. External moderation at the end of the summer term 2011 of mathematics and writing has provided the school with an accurate picture of attainment in Key Stage 1. Pupils' attainment rose by the end of Year 1; this was also reflected in reading at the end of Year 2, particularly at the higher levels. However, in writing and mathematics, pupils' attainment remains low at the end of Key Stage 1. Despite there being some evidence of small numbers of pupils achieving the higher levels in these two subjects, far too many pupils did not reach their targets. The work in pupils' books as well as the lessons observed during this inspection, highlight that pupils' progress remains inconsistent and slow in writing and mathematics. Consequently, pupil achievement is not accelerating quickly enough to recover from slow progress in the past.

During this visit, lesson observations ranged from inadequate to good. In the best lessons, pupils were motivated and keen to learn. Good subject knowledge, adult questioning and accurate assessments ensured that pupils were challenged to achieve their best. In these lessons, the work set was appropriate for the needs of individuals and consequently pupils made rapid progress. Teaching assistants supported pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities well through discussion and the use of practical resources. Consequently these pupils made similar progress to their peers. However on occasions, in other lessons, teachers spent too much time talking and consequently the pace of learning was slow, with some pupils losing interest and becoming restless. Tasks set during the introduction to lessons were not always challenging for the most-able pupils; this, along with inappropriate management of transition between activities, hindered the learning and progress of some pupils.

Marking in books now consistently informs pupils of what they have achieved through a 'traffic light system'. However, the school recognises that it now needs to develop marking to ensure that pupils know how to improve their work.

As a result of regular meetings, teachers now focus on the progress of individual pupils and groups of pupils within their class and across the year group. Teachers use data about pupils more effectively to inform their planning. However, due to past inaccuracies in assessment, this data has not always been reliable. Consequently, pupils' 'next steps to learning' are not always suitably planned or precise enough in targeting the needs of different groups of learners. As a result, outcomes for pupils remain inconsistent across the school.

Within a matter of weeks, the new interim headteacher has established a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Staff roles and responsibilities have been clarified. A culture of professional dialogue has been established, where regular conversations take place to improve the pace of learning and develop expertise amongst teachers.

The school's 'raising attainment plan' provides clear timescales for how and when monitoring activities are to take place. Position statements along with summary reports and subject action plans help contribute towards the school's self-evaluation. However, some subject plans do not provide specific measurable criteria to assess the impact of whole-school initiatives.

The quality of the work by school leaders varies. This is because some have had limited opportunities to develop their skills and is also due to the broad manner in which leaders monitor progress and improvements. Lesson observations, book scrutiny and pupil conferencing have been conducted by leaders. However, the impact of this work has not always been evaluated effectively. Consequently, leaders and managers have not identified sufficiently well, the reasons why some new initiatives such as additional lessons in numeracy, guided reading, phonics and writing across the curriculum, have had limited impact on improving outcomes for pupils.

Despite the dedication of the leadership group, many are new to their roles and some are at the stage of managing initiatives rather than providing effective challenge and guidance to staff. Some lack the experience and knowledge required to effect change quickly.

Pupils feel very safe and know they can turn to any adult for help or advice. They enjoy coming to school and understand the importance of being healthy.

The local authority's statement of action meets requirements by Ofsted and is appropriate. A significant amount of support has been provided through external consultants, opportunities to observe and share good practice, and one-to-one

professional development for subject leaders. However, the changes brought about by this support have not occurred quickly enough. This has been due in part to the leadership being in a constant state of flux. As a result, the impact on the areas identified in the last inspection is inadequate.

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 January 2011

- Raise attainment and progress, especially in writing and mathematics and particularly for the more able pupils, by improving the quality of teaching and learning, ensuring that:
 - assessment is used more rigorously to match work to pupils' different aptitudes and to guide them in their learning
 - teachers, and particularly teaching assistants, talk more with pupils throughout lessons to help them develop their ideas and understanding of what they are learning and to help them evaluate how well they are doing.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, ensuring that:
 - all staff contribute to the school's self-evaluation
 - plans for school improvement have clear timescales, are sharply focused and show how they are to be monitored for their impact
 - the monitoring of teaching and learning is more rigorous and focuses closely on the progress made by different groups of pupils.