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23 September 2011

Mr C Cole  
Executive Headteacher  
Cowley St Laurence CofE Primary School  
Worcester Road  
Uxbridge  
UB8 3TH

Dear Mr Cole

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Cowley St Laurence CofE Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 22 September 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please extend my thanks to the pupils and to the chair of the governing body, as well as the representative from the local authority (LA) who gave time to speak to me.

Following the previous inspection, the school has continued to be part of a collaboration with a nearby school. The headteacher of this school has continued to be the executive headteacher and a new head of school has been appointed to lead and manage the school on a day-to-day basis. Additionally, nine teachers left the school. The leadership team, although now established, is relatively new.

As a result of the inspection on 17-18 May 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 has made good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Overall, in 2011, unvalidated Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 results demonstrate that pupils attained standards that are above national expectations. Standards seen in lessons, school data and pupils' books indicate rapid improvements in attainment. The majority of pupils are now making good progress. There are clear indications in pupils' workbooks that they are beginning to build systematically on what they already know and are able to do, and to make up for earlier underachievement. This is particularly the case in Year 6, where lesson observations, the pupils' work and the school's records show that attainment is rising to the level that it should be. The

support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is also effective. These pupils are often set tasks that are well matched to their needs, and they are securely supported to achieve their targets. Good tracking systems are in place which enable staff to monitor pupils' progress and identify those at risk of underachieving.

Much work has been done to improve the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. As a result, it is at least satisfactory with much that is good. The executive headteacher has wisely used the resources of the collaboration to create a shared and challenging culture of accountability, resulting in a collaborative and cohesive school community. School leaders have worked successfully to engage staff in professional development and to share best practice with each other and the partner school. Consistent planning and better use of assessment information mean teachers plan lively lessons which capture the interests and needs of almost all pupils. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are rising because of improved subject knowledge and a shared understanding and application of teaching strategies. Teachers encourage pupils to share their ideas, and this helps them to develop their speaking and listening skills and articulate their thinking. Pupils speak positively about the improvements. They say learning is more fun and that they are expected to work hard. Relationships between pupils and staff in the school are strong. Pupils speak about the recent improvements in the school to which they have contributed. They are proud to represent their class on the school council and feel their views are heard, for example, in improving the school environment.

A whole-school focus on writing has led to a systematic approach to teaching writing skills. This begins in the Reception Year and is built on in each year group. Consequently, pupils are able to write for sustained periods and for a variety of purposes. Developments to the curriculum mean pupils have greater opportunity to use their writing skills across different subjects. Reading is improving because there is an appropriate focus on developing pupils' letters and sounds knowledge.

The systems for self-evaluation give the senior leaders and the governing body constantly updated and accurate information about the school's strengths and weaknesses. The governing body understands the school's performance data and makes good use of this information to challenge and hold school leaders to account. The outstanding leadership of the executive headteacher, ably supported by his talented head of school and leadership team, has ensured that all staff now take responsibility for raising attainment and are provided with opportunities to develop their management skills. Senior leaders have tried numerous strategies to align the vision of the children's centre on the same site, with that of the school, with little effect. The quality of middle leaders is variable. Some middle managers now play an active role in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and are encouraged to use their initiative. They make effective use of data and contribute significantly to school improvement.

Determined leadership, plus a willingness to acknowledge weaknesses and accept support, have enabled the school to make good progress since the previous inspection. Staff morale is high and there is a common sense of purpose. Regular monitoring of teaching coupled with effective whole-school and individual support from school leaders means the quality of teaching is rapidly improving. This in turn is leading to pupils making consistent progress across the school. School leaders are positive about the support provided by the local authority which has led to improvements in provision and resources. These improvements coupled with stronger whole-school systems for teaching and monitoring pupils' progress mean the school has made good progress in demonstrating a better capacity to improve.

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

Kekshan Salaria  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010**

- Move teaching and learning from satisfactory to good by ensuring that work is consistently pitched at the right level for all pupils and that the pace of learning is always brisk enough.
- Improve attainment in writing so that it reaches national averages by ensuring that there a consistent approach to the teaching of spelling, handwriting and grammar.
- Develop the role of middle managers so that they have the capacity to play a full part in monitoring provision and guiding school development.
- Give pupils more opportunities to take responsibility and show initiative both in lessons and around school.