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23 September 2011

Mrs A Vear
Headteacher
Lumley Junior School
Cocken Lane
Great Lumley
Chester le Street
County Durham
DH3 4JJ

Dear Mrs Vear

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Lumley Junior School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Thursday 22 September 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please thank the pupils, governors and the School Improvement Partner for their contributions.

Since the previous inspection two associate deputy headteachers have been seconded to the school. There is a new assistant headteacher and the previous deputy headteacher has left. The school has moved to single age group classes.

As a result of the inspection on 20 and 21 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 satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The headteacher and new senior leaders are working well together to implement changes to improve achievement and increase progress. School data show that attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2011 rose in mathematics at both the expected and higher levels. The new calculations policy is providing consistency through the school and pupils value gaining awards for their knowledge of multiplication. The introduction of practical mathematics homework is extending pupils' confidence in developing basic skills. Achievement in English is not as good as mathematics. The school now analyses information from its robust pupil tracking systems well to identify progress across reading, writing and mathematics. This confirmed the weakness in reading, as identified in the previous inspection, and also found weaknesses in writing skills. Progress in reading is now increasing. Pupils are delighted with their new well-organised and attractive library, which is extending their appreciation of reading and research skills. The introduction of whole-school guided reading is also increasing progress, but it is inconsistent. In the best sessions more-able pupils work well at

January 2011



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

a higher level and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are confidently developing basic skills. In other sessions pupils are unsure of how to carry out their independent tasks and lack enthusiasm when working with the teacher. Progress in writing is slower than reading. The introduction of the spelling logs is ensuring that pupils learn words that are directly relevant to their needs and they appreciate this system. Progress in other aspects of writing is inconsistent. Some pupils are not making enough progress in developing skills in writing sentences or extending writing across different styles.

There have been improvements in teaching. There is a higher proportion of good teaching, but some inadequate features remain. Planning has improved and includes clear indications of challenge for more-able pupils and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. In the best teaching there is a very clear understanding of each pupil's different previous learning and expectations of how this will be extended during the lesson. This teaching includes the use of carefully focused questions to probe each pupil's understanding, a fast pace and enjoyable tasks that build sequentially to extend pupils' learning. Inadequate features still include low expectations of more-able pupils, not enough focus on using the assessment information to systematically extend individual pupils' new learning or provide them with clear guidance for improvement. The quality of support staff is better but is inconsistent. It is better in group work than in whole-class sessions.

Interventions to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or to challenge more-able pupils have improved. This is due to the better analysis of individual tracking to identify weaknesses in progress. Target-setting is better. Pupils have a good understanding of how to improve their writing, but are not as clear about their mathematics or reading targets. Marking is now more consistent and better focused.

The school has broadened its curriculum effectively. It has analysed pupils' different needs well and provided better resources, for example, books for the reading scheme and the library. The strategy of using a key novel each half term as the basis for literacy development, alongside creating links with other subjects, is working well. Opportunities for applying mathematics to solve problems are now improved.

The local authority's statement of action for improvement is fit for purpose. Its support for the school has been good, particularly the creation of the school strategy group to monitor improvement regularly. The additional contributions of the associate deputy headteachers provide valuable additional expertise. Support of the School Improvement Partner is effective. Partnership with the feeder infant school is working well.

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

Margaret Shepherd
Additional inspector

January 2011

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 20 and 21 January 2011

- Accelerate the rate of pupils' progress and improve their achievement in Years 3 to 6 by:
 - raising the expectations of staff of what all pupils can achieve
 - adding to the pupils' enjoyment while raising the demand and level of challenge of learning in lessons
 - providing more-able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities with activities which are closely matched to their ability and need.

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning, support and intervention by:
 - making certain that assessment information is used systematically to identify pupils' needs and plan learning
 - ensuring pupils are consistently provided with clear guidance for improvement
 - developing target-setting to ensure that all pupils are aware of their progress.

- Broaden the range of curriculum opportunities to enable pupils of all abilities and needs to apply their mathematical skills to solve problems and to provide a clear focus on reading in all subjects.