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Mrs P Hazlehurst
Headteacher
The CofE School of St Edmund and St John
Beechwood Road
Dudley
DY2 7QA

Dear Mrs Hazlehurst

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of The CofE School of St Edmund and St John

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 9 November 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to those staff and pupils I met and the representative from the local authority.

Since the last inspection, the headteacher left and, in June 2011, you and your deputy headteacher were seconded to the school from a local primary school. Since September, four team leaders have been appointed who each have responsibility for phase groups.

As a result of the inspection on 7 March 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 good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

In the most recent tests, standards for pupils at the end of Year 6 were well below average. Attainment was below average in English and exceptionally low in mathematics. Standards for this cohort had been very low at the end of Key Stage 1, so pupils had made insufficient progress and the gap with the national average had widened. However since your arrival in June there has been a rapid turnaround in the progress pupils make. In lessons seen during the inspection, all pupils were making at least satisfactory progress and some, in the best lessons, were making good progress in both English and mathematics. Progress monitoring indicates that since the start of September the rate of pupils' progress has continued to accelerate.

In the short space of time since you and your deputy headteacher were seconded, there has been a transformation in the ethos within the school and the attitude of staff and pupils. This is most apparent in the behaviour of pupils in lessons and around school. In lessons seen, behaviour was good, with only a few minor incidents of low-level disruption in lessons that were satisfactory and where the pace slackened. There are warning books in all classrooms, and the number of reported incidents has fallen sharply. The few remaining incidents are largely due to a very small number of pupils with behavioural difficulties. Pupils are rightly proud of their dining room which they now liken to a restaurant with tablecloths, and flowers and cutlery set out on the tables. Lunchtime has been extended and staggered to give all pupils enough time to eat their lunch and engage in outside activities. The environment during lunchtime was calm and orderly and now pupils take responsibility of serving themselves. Outside, the playground has been divided into zones for free play, quiet time and games organized by experienced teaching assistants. Pupils benefit from a new climbing frame and sports equipment. Pupils themselves take responsibility for their behaviour and that of others, and are keen that the new hockey sticks are used sensibly. A new behaviour policy has been introduced which has involved all members of the school community, including pupils. It is focussed on pupils making choices about their actions.

You and your senior leaders have taken a zero tolerance approach to holidays in term time and worked tirelessly with parents to engage their support in promoting good attendance from when pupils first start in Reception. Consequently, the current level of attendance for the first half of the autumn term has already exceeded 95%, which is the school's target for the year. Pupils are enthusiastic about the new rewards and incentives to attend regularly, including inter-class competitions, certificates and prizes for 100% attendance. The school responds rapidly to unexplained absence from Day 1, as confirmed by pupils. The school has also enforced sanctions with parents and carers where necessary. The school is working closely with the local primary school from where you have been seconded to share measures that have been effective there. Pupils enjoy coming to school and speak with enthusiasm about their lessons and their experience in school.

You have begun to tackle weaknesses in teaching through a programme of rigorous monitoring, coaching and training, strongly supported by your senior leaders. Monitoring of teaching is focussed on how the pupils are learning, and data is being used increasingly to hold teachers to account for the performance of their classes. As yet, team leaders, who are new to their role, have not been involved in this. You have an accurate view of the quality teaching, which has improved since the last inspection. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. The majority of lessons seen during the inspection were satisfactory and none was inadequate. In the best lessons, which were good, teachers had high expectations of what pupils

could achieve and pupils were challenged to do as well they could. Lesson planning, at its best, identified activities to meet different needs, including those of higher attaining pupils, and took account of pupils' starting points. Pupils were given the opportunity to work in groups or, independently, to take responsibility for their own learning. The best marking informed them how well they were doing and what they needed to do to improve. Elsewhere, teachers spent too long talking from the front and the pace of learning slackened. The effective deployment of additional adults is variable as is the quality of lesson planning and marking, so that pupils are not always clear how well they are doing. There is still some way to go to ensure that teaching is consistently good.

The local authority has been supportive over the establishment of a new leadership structure and is engaged in effectively monitoring the progress the school is making against the identified areas for improvement. The local authority quickly realised that that the action plan needed to reflect the fact that the overarching priority was to address shortcomings in the leadership and management of the school before the areas for development in the last inspection could be addressed.

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

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2011

- The headteacher and governing body need to take decisive action to improve the management of pupils' behaviour by ensuring that:
 - pupils, parents and carers, staff and members of the governing body are all involved in reviewing and implementing the school's behaviour policy and code of conduct
 - actions taken to improve the behaviour of pupils who frequently misbehave are rigorous enough to significantly reduce instances of poor behaviour.

- Improve pupils' behaviour, particularly at breaks and lunchtime, so that they play together well by:
 - separating quiet activities from boisterous games
 - providing a range of play equipment
 - ensuring that adults take prompt, effective action to address any misbehaviour that occurs.

- Increase attendance to at least 95% for the 2011/12 school year and reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent by
 - developing further incentives for pupils to encourage good attendance
 - identifying schools in similar circumstances where attendance is above average and adapting their strategies to meet the needs of the school's community.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it consistently promotes good progress by:
 - keeping pace high throughout the lesson
 - ensuring able pupils are fully challenged throughout lessons
 - exploring ways of increasing pupils' independence.