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Mrs J Thorpe
Headteacher
Dean Valley Community Primary School
Albert Road
Bollington
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Cheshire
SK10 5HS

Dear Mrs Thorpe

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Dean Valley Community Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 January 2012, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Discussions with senior leaders and managers, representatives of the governing body, the pupils and an officer from the local authority were also very helpful. Please pass on my thanks to all concerned for the time they gave to talk to me and for the welcome I received.

Since the July 2011 inspection, the deputy headteacher has left the school and two temporary teachers have been appointed to cover maternity leave. A new deputy headteacher took up post in January 2012. Three new members of the governing body have been elected.

As a result of the inspection on 7 and 8 July 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 2011 unvalidated test results show Year 6 pupils made less than expected progress, particularly in mathematics, to reach broadly average attainment levels. Inspection evidence indicates pupils' achievement is improving. Almost all pupils,

including those who are most able, are making expected progress and an increasing number are making greater gains in their learning. Consequently, more pupils, particularly those in Years 4-6, are reaching or exceeding age-related expectations. Nonetheless, expected progress is the least these pupils are capable of achieving. Pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities make similar progress to their peers because of the effective support they receive in lessons. Pupils' achievement in mathematics is improving because the whole-school calculation policy is being consistently applied. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils, particularly the most able, to practise and consolidate their skills through investigative work. The opportunities for pupils to write at length mean their achievement in writing is also stronger, although weak handwriting skills limit the quality of work for some pupils. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are keen to participate in activities, willing to work hard and cooperate well with each other.

All teaching is characterised by trusting relationships. Teaching is improving because assessment information is used more effectively to match activities to different ability groups within each class. Although greater consideration is being given to the needs of more-able pupils, activities do not always provide enough challenge to enable these pupils to extend their skills and knowledge fully. Teaching is most effective when all pupils have a clear understanding of how to achieve success. Teaching is less effective when too much time is taken with teacher-directed tasks. The consistent application of the marking and target-setting policy means teachers are providing pupils with greater guidance on how to improve their work. Pupils have relevant targets which teachers refer to during lessons. Some teachers are very effective in using their day-to-day assessment to identify precise short-term goals to enable pupils to make rapid progress.

The school has worked quickly to ensure the systems to safeguard pupils meet statutory requirements. Policies and procedures have been reviewed; roles and responsibilities have been re-established and all staff have received up-to-date training. Consequently, staff, including those who are new to the school, have a consistent understanding of their role and the procedures they should follow to protect pupils. Members of the governing body have increased their role in monitoring and quality assuring the school's safeguarding systems. Regular meetings between the headteacher and the nominated governor for safeguarding plus a focus on safeguarding at every governing body meeting mean that members are more aware of their duties and alert to any issues. Pupils say they feel safe and have confidence in the adults who care for them.

Senior leaders and managers, with strong support from the local authority, have responded positively to the major shortcomings identified at the previous inspection. The systems to monitor the quality of teaching are beginning to improve because monitoring activities happen more regularly and subject leaders have a greater role in scrutinising teachers' planning and pupils' work. This is leading to appropriate whole-school and individual training and support for staff. Nonetheless, some of

these monitoring activities, particularly in relation to English teaching, are not frequent enough to address remaining inconsistencies and secure greater gains in pupils' achievement. Members of the governing body are becoming more rigorous in checking the work of the school. Monthly meetings to assess school improvement are effectively holding senior leaders and managers to account. Subject leaders have appropriate plans to secure further improvement. However, the whole-school strategic plan is too reliant on the local authority's statement of action. Nevertheless, senior leaders and managers have an accurate view of their strengths and weaknesses and have forged a common sense of purpose and desire to secure further improvements across the school community.

The local authority's statement of action has been evaluated and it fulfils requirements. The support provided by the local authority has been concerted and effective. Local authority officers have provided whole-school training for staff and fully supported senior leaders and managers in improving the systems to monitor teaching. A comprehensive audit of the school's safeguarding procedures has effectively supported the school in addressing key areas of weakness.

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

Joanne Olsson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 7 July 2011

- Ensure, as a matter of urgency, that all safeguarding regulations and duties are fully met.
- Raise attainment and accelerate progress across the school in English and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - teachers consistently use assessment information to set tasks which help pupils and particularly the more able to achieve their potential
 - marking is consistent in helping pupils know how to improve their work
 - targets are sufficiently challenging and pupils are fully involved in setting and reviewing them.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that leaders and the governing body rigorously check how well plans and policies relating to the quality of teaching and learning and school improvement are implemented.