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3 February 2012

Mr T Cooper  
The Headteacher  
Widden Primary School  
Sinope Street  
Gloucester  
Gloucestershire  
GL1 4AW

Dear Mr Cooper

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Widden Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 2 February 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the governors and the local authority officer who came into school to talk to me and to the pupils who so willingly shared their work with me.

There have been significant staff changes since the last inspection. In September 2011 a new deputy headteacher took up a permanent position at the school, following her temporary secondment to this post. Six teachers have been appointed in this academic year, three of whom are newly qualified teachers. The rate of pupil mobility continues to rise, with a growing proportion joining the school using the English language for the first time. The heritage of the pupils continues to change with about one third of the pupils arriving directly from Eastern European countries. About 40% of the pupils who start Year 3 remain in this school to take the national tests in Year 6.

As a result of the inspection on 23 and 24 November 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 satisfactory progress in making improvements.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Although standards in mathematics were significantly below national averages in the 2011 tests, the pupils who had been at this school for their Key Stage 2 experience

achieved satisfactorily. The proportion of current Year 6 pupils working on age-related levels in mathematics is improving. This is because teachers now use a detailed pupil-tracking system to check individual levels and evaluate the progress that is being made. Mathematics lessons have become more meaningful to the pupils with competitive quizzes included in sessions which enliven learning and ensure pupils' engagement. Pupils assess how well they have grasped a mathematical concept and explain their level of understanding to the teacher. Additional group sessions and one-to-one tutoring are accelerating the progress made by individuals. Although pupils are set specific targets to help them improve their work, teachers do not provide sufficient guidance when the mathematics books are marked and checked for accuracy. This means that the pupils do not clearly understand what the next step in their learning should be.

Standards in English at the end of Year 6 were also significantly below national averages in the 2011 tests. However, the rates of progress made by the pupils who had been at this school since Year 3 were significantly above the national average. Pupil progress in English is improving because pupils are gaining increased confidence in writing for a range of different purposes. This has been made possible through a more creative approach to the curriculum. For example, as part of their topic based on 'Life in the freezer', and following an outing to Bristol Zoo, Year 6 pupils demonstrated a good use of figurative language in their description of how animals kept in cages might feel. Pupils who felt more confident in their writing skills were able to extend this activity by writing letters of complaint to the manager of the zoo. Pupils have a clear understanding of individual and class targets for improvement in their writing skills and these are reviewed regularly. There are some good examples of marking in the pupils' English books, where teachers explain clearly to the pupils what they have done well and how they can accelerate progress in their learning. However, this is an inconsistency in approach throughout the school.

### **The quality of teaching**

Evaluations undertaken up to July 2011 indicate that the school successfully meet its target to improve the quality of teaching and learning from satisfactory to good or better. The significant turnover of teaching staff had a slight impact on performance during the first part of this academic year as teachers settled in. Nevertheless, teaching over time remains never less than satisfactory and is still frequently good or better. The lessons observed during the monitoring visit challenged and engaged the pupils well in their learning. Sessions moved along at a good pace and expectations of work were high. Questioning by the teachers was skilful and used well to check the pupils' level of understanding. Good use was made of opportunities for the pupils to talk to each other about their learning. For example, in a Year 2 class the pupils talked excitedly to their partners about writing interesting sentences. Those pupils who speak English as an additional language were supported well with pictures which helped put the lesson in context. Whilst teachers provide good levels of verbal feedback, insufficient time is available for the pupils to reflect on the comments that teachers make in their books and consider how they might amend their next piece of

work. Parents and carers appreciate opportunities for sharing their children's work during the newly-introduced open mornings.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils show positive attitudes to their learning and are respectful of each others' beliefs, values and opinions. They behave well in and around school. Pupils are kept safe and secure because staff at school are vigilant and work very closely with social services and other extended services. The continuing upward trend in the attendance rates reflects well the efforts of the school to ensure that members of the community appreciate the importance of regular full-time education.

### **The quality of leadership and management of the school**

The headteacher and his deputy have developed a strong working partnership and their individual strengths complement the work of each other. They demonstrate a refreshed approach and commitment to the school and the local community it serves. However, they realise that the pace of improvement needs to be accelerated. The pupil progress tracker is used consistently throughout the school and this is now enabling senior leaders to identify where pupils need to make accelerated progress. This is closely aligned to the monitoring of teaching which is carefully evaluated by the deputy headteacher. Classroom practice is being strengthened where necessary through well-targeted coaching and mentoring. Middle leaders have started to develop an understanding of school performance. They are beginning to understand the importance of a focused approach to work sampling, lesson observations and pupil target discussions to secure improvement. Governors know the school well and provide senior leaders with suitable support and challenge. Together with senior leaders, they are building a better capacity to improve. The local authority has provided a good level of support which the school has engaged very well with. This support is evaluated regularly and adapted where deemed necessary. The school has also used effectively support provided through the local schools partnership.

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

Lorna Brackstone  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve pupils' achievement by raising the consistency of teaching and learning so that at least 75% is good or better by July 2011 by:
  - teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can do
  - teachers use questioning effectively so that pupils spend more time actively engaged
  - pupils can evaluate the effectiveness of their learning against precise success criteria.
- Improve pupils' achievement in mathematics by:
  - using the whole-class part of lessons more creatively so that pupils spend more time developing their mathematical learning
  - ensuring that teachers have a clear picture of what pupils have already learnt so that they are building on this learning when they plan their lessons.
- Improve pupils' progress and raise attainment, particularly in writing and mathematics, by:
  - setting precise targets for pupils' next steps in learning that accurately match each pupil's abilities and needs
  - ensuring that teachers use these next steps when they are feeding back to pupils on the success of their learning and give time for pupils to respond to this feedback
  - sharing these next steps consistently with pupils and their parents and carers.