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Mrs J Robertson
Acting Headteacher
The Iver Village Junior School
High Street
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Dear Mrs Robertson

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of The Iver Village Junior School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 8 February 2012, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Discussions with pupils, staff, members of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority were also very helpful in evaluating the progress the school has made. Please pass on my thanks to all concerned for the time they gave and for the welcome I received.

Since the inspection of June 2011 there have been a number of significant changes in the leadership of the school. Following the retirement of the headteacher at the end of August 2011, the new school year began with part-time support from a local leader in education and two leaders in the school sharing the role of acting headteacher. In October 2011 a further re-organisation of leadership took place with the recruitment of a new executive headteacher and an acting headteacher from neighbouring schools in the local authority. Both are in post until September 2012 and each works part-time in the school. The governing body is currently in the process of recruiting a permanent headteacher. The senior leadership has also been restructured.

At the time of this monitoring inspection, two teachers were absent from school on maternity leave; their posts were being covered from within the existing staff. The organisation of classes has been restructured so that all pupils are in single-aged year groups. The school has also been subject to a programme of building and refurbishment work.

As a result of the inspection on 23 and 24 June 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 inadequate progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The acting headteacher and executive headteacher are securing the confidence of the school community. They have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, for example weaknesses in the quality of teaching. Progress in addressing the areas of improvement from the previous inspection has accelerated since they took up their posts, in part because detailed and ambitious development plans with measurable success criteria are now in place. The roles of other school leaders have been re-negotiated to ensure that they are sharply defined and meet the current needs of the school. With support from the local authority these leaders are becoming more effective in their roles. They are more proactive in evaluating their areas of responsibility and drawing up action plans; however, this work is at an early stage and has not yet had a marked impact on pupils' achievement.

Unvalidated results for end of Key Stage 2 assessments in 2011 were broadly average overall in English. However, the proportion of pupils attaining at least Level 4 in mathematics was well below average. Pupils are not making the accelerated progress they need from Year 3 to Year 6 to reach the targets the school has set them. This lack of progress is evident also in lessons and pupils' work in books. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, however, are making better progress because they are effectively supported by additional adults in the school. Likewise pupils from Traveller backgrounds are well supported through partnership work with the local authority support service and most are making good progress. Pupils with English as an additional language are making progress in line with the majority of pupils in the school. All pupils are now tracked individually in classes and in groups; this information is analysed with all teachers. Teachers now have individual action plans to address underachievement. However, this way of working is new and is not yet having a significant impact on pupils' progress. Teachers' assessments are now becoming more secure, although not consistently so.

Leaders are tackling the few remain pockets of inadequate teaching with rigour. Systematic monitoring of teaching is now in place with evaluations of quality confirmed as accurate by this inspection. Teachers now benefit from useful developmental feedback, which is focused appropriately on the impact of teaching on learning, and being linked to an advanced skills teacher or a local authority learning consultant mentor. Such mentors support the teachers in their planning, teaching and assessment. Impact is, as yet, mixed with some teaching moving from satisfactory to good and some which remains inadequate. Too much teaching does not meet the needs of pupils and is pitched either too high or too low. As a result, some activities are not challenging enough, particularly for the more able pupils. Whereas in one mathematics lesson good use was made of individual whiteboards to check understanding and to ensure all pupils were involved and motivated, too many lessons are overly teacher directed and involve the pupils insufficiently well. Teachers are not routinely using ongoing assessments to re-shape lessons to meet pupils' emerging needs, abilities and interests. In addition, and despite recent efforts

to maximise learning time, too much time is wasted at the beginning of lessons. Pupils lack a sense of urgency to complete their tasks. Marking has improved in some classes, but not consistently across the school. Too much marking lacks useful feedback to help pupils make the next steps in their learning.

Pupils enjoy opportunities to read and they talk enthusiastically and knowledgeably about their favourite authors. They are making better progress in reading than at the last inspection. While pupils say they enjoy writing too because they like to be imaginative, sometimes they are asked to redraft whole sections for little purpose and with little guidance on how to improve it. In one lesson, for example, some pupils were copying a story with little impact on learning. Pupils report they would like more opportunities to write extended pieces of writing. Opportunities for pupils to apply their number skills to mathematical problems have not been increased significantly. Pupils' ability to complete these problems is sometimes hindered by their underdeveloped skills. Pupils themselves say they are insecure, in using division for example. Pupils' work over time shows that knowledge and skills taught in mathematics lessons do not always build on each other in a systematic way thereby making it difficult for pupils to consolidate their learning.

Pupils generally behave well in lessons. The vast majority are polite, friendly and welcoming. Much has been done in the school to support those few pupils with behaviour difficulties to good effect. For example, the school's behaviour policy has been reviewed recently with input from pupils. Pupils spoke positively about merits and stickers for good behaviour. In some classes however, teachers do not make their expectations clear enough, for instance by accepting off-task talking during lessons.

The governing body is ambitious for the school and committed to ensuring that it improves quickly. Following training and support from the local authority, members are now well placed to track the school's progress through the detailed and accurate information it receives and through the measureable success criteria in school plans. They are now asking more challenging questions, holding the school to account, and showing an understanding of where improvements are needed. Arrangements for the performance management of teachers are now in place.

The local authority is providing appropriate challenge and support to the school to improve the quality of leadership, teaching and learning. Its statement of action is now fit for purpose.

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

Michelle Winter
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve leadership and management of the school by:
 - ensuring that the senior leadership team supports and fully involves the middle managers and the governing body in the effective running of the school
 - ensuring the whole school data are accurate and analysed effectively at all levels to secure effective target setting
 - ensuring senior leaders work with middle leaders to produce effective plans for improvement.
- Improve teaching by:
 - fine-tuning lesson activities to closely match pupils' needs
 - raising the quality of marking
 - monitoring lessons regularly and giving clear feedback to individual teachers on how to improve.
- Raise attainment in mathematics by:
 - improving pupils' ability to interpret mathematical problems
 - ensuring pupils are able to identify the appropriate calculation required to answer the question posed
 - ensuring pupils are able to choose and use mathematical equipment appropriately.