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Ms T Bailey  
Headteacher  
Pixies Hill Primary School  
Hazeldell Road  
Hemel Hempstead  
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Dear Ms Bailey

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 24 February 2012 for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please would you also pass on my thanks to the local authority representative and the Chair of the Governing Body for their time in our discussions.

Since the last inspection, four out of seven members of staff have been newly appointed (two of whom are newly qualified teachers) and there are three new members of the restructured senior leadership team. Subject leaders have been established and have developed a more rigorous review of planning, pupils' work and teaching within their subject areas. Four new governors have joined the governing body.

As a result of the inspection on 25 May 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**

Pupils' achievement is improving. A concentrated focus on developing writing skills particularly for boys (identified at the time of the last inspection), across all areas of the curriculum is having a positive impact. Initiatives such as 'Big Write', the development of speaking and drama activities, and the instigation of 'talking homework' are all contributing to raising standards in English. In 18 months, the percentage of pupils across the whole school who are working at the levels expected

January 2012



for their ages in writing have increased by 12% and are now slightly above average. An analysis of boys' and girls' writing at the end of Key Stage 2 shows that the gap is narrowing and boys are catching up, resulting in improving progress.

A number of interventions have been instigated following an analysis of last year's standardised assessment results. These are starting to have a positive impact on raising attainment, after a slight drop in those attaining higher levels in mathematics. These interventions are specifically targeted to the differing individual needs of learners. Because of the more rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning, work in many lessons is more closely matched to individual needs. This was particularly noticeable in mathematics lessons and work in pupils' books, resulting in pupils making better progress.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching is improving. Teaching and learning are more rigorously monitored by the headteacher, the teacher in charge of teaching and learning, and subject coordinators. Findings are fed back to teachers in order to improve practice. The school's monitoring of teaching, and evidence from this monitoring inspection, show that there are more good lessons than previously. A cohesive team approach is evident throughout the school and is helping to ensure that changes reflect best practice. A great deal of emphasis has been given over the last year to training both teachers and teaching assistants in order to help them to utilise support in the classroom more effectively. A whole-school review has ensured that support is rightly directed where it is most needed. Marking of pupils' work across the school is good and clearly supports pupils in understanding what they need to do next to improve. Teaching is more clearly focused on the support of different groups and that is why the gap is narrowing between boys' and girls' writing. Opportunities, for example in Year 6 to write a script for an episode of *Doctor Who*, captures pupils' imagination so that boys, in particular, are keen to participate.

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

Behaviour remains good as it was in the last inspection. Pupils listen attentively and, throughout the school, are keen to answer teachers' questions and collaborate well with each other. They have good attitudes to learning. Teachers encourage pupils to get on with each other and to work well together. This good behaviour seen in lessons spills out into playtimes and pupils of all ages play harmoniously together, showing genuine concern about each other. At the time of the monitoring, inspection safeguarding met requirements. Attendance remains similar to the national average.

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

The newly formed senior leadership team is having a positive influence on a more rigorous approach to teaching and learning. Although still new to their roles, subject leaders have clear and high expectations of how they want their subject areas to

develop. However, it is too soon to see the full impact of their plans on pupils' achievement and progress. Members of the governing body visit regularly and are attached to an individual class so that they can see the progress individuals make. Pupil progress meetings have been recently restructured and are having a positive impact as interventions are able to be introduced much earlier to support individual pupils' needs. The local authority have supported the school in monitoring and assessing these initiatives for impact.

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

Susan Vale  
**Additional inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010

- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning by:
  - ensuring that work is closely matched to the individual needs of pupils
  - deploying additional help in the classroom more effectively
  - increasing opportunities for pupils to develop independence in learning through extended tasks and investigation.
  
- Develop the role of subject leaders so that they
  - look more critically at the impact of teaching on learning when monitoring and evaluating the work of the school
  - ensure that change is implemented more consistently to reflect the best practice in the school.
  
- Improve provision for writing, particularly for boys by:
  - using speaking and drama more widely as a starting point to help pupils develop their ideas
  - ensuring that pupils' writing opportunities cover a broad range of contexts and purposes linked to different areas of the curriculum.