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Mrs Jacqueline Flower
Headteacher
Snape Wood Primary and Nursery School
Aspen Road
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NG6 7DS

Dear Mrs Flower

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Snape Wood Primary and Nursery School

Thank you for the help which your staff, and in particular your deputy, gave when I inspected your school on 13 June 2012 and for the information which was provided during the inspection. I am also grateful to the Chair of the Governing Body, who so generously gave of her time to speak with me, and to those pupils who I spoke to during lessons and around the school.

Since the last school inspection in November 2011, there have been some changes in teaching staff and in your absence, your deputy has been leading and managing the school. There is a recent new teaching appointment in Year 5. One of the middle leaders, who is supernumerary, was providing cover in Year 1 on the week of inspection. One long-term supply teacher is currently covering the Reception class.

As a result of the inspection on 15 November 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 school was required to raise attainment in English and mathematics and to address the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, particularly in Key Stage 2. There have been some improvements to the quality of teaching by ensuring the learning objectives and success criteria are introduced promptly at the beginning of lessons and that pupils begin their independent learning more quickly. Planning reflects consideration for the range of abilities in each class, including for the more able, but the activities are not yet consistently well adapted to ensure sufficient challenge is provided in every case. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are better included in some classes than others. This is because

the continual change of teachers in some classes means that some staff are still getting to know and understand these pupils. There is a greater emphasis on setting targets and marking pupils' work more carefully for written accuracy and use of calculation. However, good practice is not yet completely consistent across the school. In some classes, where pupils' targets have been achieved or where there is evidence of a learning objective being met, pupils are not moving on quickly enough and repeat much of the same work. Consequently, achievement is not where it should be across the school and many pupils are still underperforming. The achievement and progress of some year groups in some subjects is significantly below where it should be, although, because of improved teaching and monitoring, there is now an improving trend. Achievement is nearer to the national average in Key Stage 1 and consistently good teaching and improved use of targets in Year 6 means that, by the end of Key Stage 2, the gap is also closing. School data indicate that the school is likely to meet floor standards in 2012. Improved use of data also ensures that the school is able to identify in which year groups and subjects pupils' progress has plateaued or receded. Those groups or individuals who are not on track are being very closely monitored, and an increasing number of pupils are making satisfactory or better progress. The school works conscientiously to support pupils whose attendance and punctuality are poor, including through the provision of a very well attended breakfast club. Attendance has improved and is now typically in line with that of other schools. However, the school recognises that it has more to do in supporting the families of latecomers in some classes, as their poor punctuality hinders their start to learning each day.

At this monitoring visit, the quality of teaching varied too much – a judgment which matches the school's own monitoring by senior leaders and external partners. The school has not yet eradicated all inadequate teaching. While there is little outstanding practice evident, there is some increasingly good practice across the school well worth sharing with all staff, but they are not yet making the most of working and planning together. However, subject leaders are beginning to cascade ideas and initiatives to ensure consistency of teaching approaches school wide, for example the introduction of the new 'grammar blast' in literacy to supplement the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make). Instability of staffing has slowed the progress towards the points for improvement in teaching from the last inspection and to ensuring consistency of good or better practice. The school is only just beginning to develop approaches to ensure that pupils apply their literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects. Currently, opportunities are missed for extended writing, for example in topic work. The school plans to remedy the situation as part of the themed curriculum. Not all opportunities for using and applying mathematical skills or information and communication technology are being utilised, for example in science. Staff, under the guidance of subject leaders, have begun to consider how they might incorporate these skills to enhance pupils' understanding and learning.

One of the most significant improvements at the school this academic year is the improved behaviour of pupils. Although behaviour was judged to be satisfactory overall at the last inspection, learning was often interrupted by pupils not being fully occupied in lessons or because pupils were unsettled by the staffing changes and

inconsistent behaviour management. High expectations from a more stable staff group, trained lunchtime supervisors and play leaders introducing their peers to traditional playground games ensure there is a positive climate for learning within classrooms, more purposeful play and a calmer atmosphere around school.

The school is developing its capacity for sustaining improvement. The deputy headteacher has effectively identified and worked on priorities in the headteacher's absence. Continuity for each class is carefully considered to reduce the impact of staffing changes. The school plans to undertake more rigorous monitoring and development of science and subjects other than English and mathematics. It has also identified the importance of ensuring high-quality provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure that children achieve the early learning goals, which are expected by the end of their Reception Year, even if they have entered the school from a very low baseline. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these plans and initiatives. The governing body has been proactive in monitoring the school and utilises the skills and knowledge of its members positively. It continues to struggle to appoint parent governors, where there are currently some vacancies. The governing body has identified the necessity to reconsider roles and responsibilities to ensure it fulfills not only its statutory duties effectively – as it does – but also supports the school through its imminent change of headteacher, towards necessary improvement and the next inspection.

Following the last inspection, when the school was given a notice to improve, the local authority produced a statement of action which was deemed to be 'fit for purpose'. The local authority has put in place a temporary, but very effective, professional partnership with a local primary school to support the school's capacity to address the improvement priorities identified at the last inspection. This highly beneficial arrangement is to continue across the next academic year, which is particularly helpful in view of an imminent change of headteacher. The external partner has made a significant impact, mainly in developing leadership and improving systems for monitoring teaching and learning. The local authority has provided high-quality teaching and learning specialists in English and mathematics for staff development and specialist support. It has also provided support to senior leaders in how to more effectively use its data. The impact of this has been positive for the core staff team, but the impact across the school has been significantly reduced by the further staffing changes. The local authority continues to monitor the school through Improvement Board Meetings and has a realistic view of the school's progress. The school is beginning to build leadership capacity, as is demonstrated by strengths in whole-school leadership and the developing leadership in literacy. Leadership in mathematics has been slower due to staffing arrangements.

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

Jane Melbourne
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2011 were:

- Raise levels of attainment in English and mathematics further by:
 - ensuring pupils use grammar and punctuation correctly and that spellings are accurate and that writing is well structured
 - improving opportunities for pupils to write at length
 - establishing a consistent approach to calculation in order that pupils improve their mathematical skills and understanding of place value.

- Address the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, particularly in Key Stage 2, by:
 - ensuring that introductions to lessons are not too long and that the work provided in lessons meets the needs of pupils of different abilities
 - ensuring that work is always suitably challenging for more-able pupils
 - making sure that pupils understand the next steps in their learning and that they are given more opportunities to respond to teachers' marking.

- Enhance the impact of leadership and management by developing the skills of middle managers so that they can provide more support to the senior team.