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Mrs Harriet Phelps-Knights
Headteacher
Janet Duke Primary School
Markhams Chase
Laindon
Basildon
SS15 5LS

Dear Mrs Phelps-Knights

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Janet Duke Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 September 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, governors, local authority officer and the members of the senior leadership team who gave their time to talk to me.

Major staff changes took effect on 1 September 2012. A new deputy headteacher, all phase leaders and nine classroom teachers began their roles last week.

As a result of the inspection on 16 January 2012, 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 good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Since the inspection, there has been a significant rise in pupils' achievement in both Key Stage 1 and 2. This has resulted from an increase in the quality of teaching and the addition of a range of booster groups and other interventions. The school has sensibly used its pupil premium funding to employ additional tutors who work successfully with small groups and has engaged apprentices to increase staffing in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The effectiveness of the school's interventions can be seen in the rise in attainment in the 2012 national tests. In 2011, attainment at Level 4 was well-below average in English and, especially, mathematics. However, in 2012, attainment was broadly in line with national averages. This represents a substantial improvement. The increase was most dramatic in mathematics. However, even with these striking improvements, the proportion of pupils making expected progress across Key Stage 2 was still a little below average, although much better

than last year. This is partly because improvement at Level 5, whilst still significant, has been less pronounced. The school's monitoring information indicates that the pace of pupils' progress has accelerated throughout the year. The school recognises that consistently accelerated progress remains necessary to address the legacy of underachievement.

As this was the first full week of teaching in the school for nearly half of the teachers, no systematic monitoring of these teachers had yet taken place beyond the observations made at interview. Short visits by the inspector with the headteacher supported the school's view that inadequate teaching had been eradicated and the proportion of good teaching had increased significantly. Discussion with the local authority supported this conclusion. The improvement in the quality of teaching has taken place through a combination of staff training and development and robust action to remove less effective teachers who were not improving sufficiently. This in turn, gives evidence of improved leadership and management. However, once again middle leaders are new in post and so have yet to demonstrate a track record of impact. Since the inspection, teachers have planned together and, during this monitoring visit, there was good evidence of collaborative planning so that, in most instances, pupils in each year group were doing work that was appropriate for their age and ability.

The school deploys a lot of adults in addition to teachers. Direct observations of lessons noted that these adults are used well. Teachers are aware of the need to accelerate the pace of learning but, on occasions, some teachers still spend too long talking to the class rather than actively engaging them in learning.

The linking of letters and sounds (systematic phonics) has an improved profile in the school. Teachers are aware of the need to encourage pupils to use the strategies learned in these focussed sessions in other lessons but this is not done consistently. Sometimes the colloquial use of English goes unchallenged, both orally and in writing, and this makes more difficult the school's work to improve spelling, which it has rightly identified as a priority. In Key Stage 2, good work was seen in developing mathematics skills to solve problems.

The local authority's statement of action was judged to be fit for purpose. The local authority has supported the school intensively but is currently reviewing this support because of the school's improved capacity. Its June monitoring visit had a positive impact. For example, as a result of the report, targets for pupils are now improved. A programme to raise the quality of teaching in the final weeks of the last term also had a positive impact. The governing body has expanded and increased its pool of expertise. Stronger links have been forged with parents and teachers. Governors have developed skills of challenge. Along with the governing body, the school's leaders have improved communication with parents and carers, for example increasing the number of reports and helping parents and carers to understand how their child's attainment compares with national expectations.

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

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2012

- Accelerate pupils' progress in order to raise their attainment, particularly in writing and mathematics, so that progress is good in 75% of lessons by December 2012, through:
 - improving the teaching of phonics so that pupils are better able to blend letters and sounds and apply what they have learnt to new words and contexts
 - maintaining an appropriate balance of teacher-led and pupil-centred learning activities in lessons that makes full use of the learning support staff
 - providing clear and achievable learning tasks and targets, shared with pupils, that enable them to make demonstrably good progress in each lesson
 - ensuring that writing and numeracy skills are taught across all subjects, to include a focus on improving pupils' presentation and accuracy
 - developing marking practice that involves pupils in assessing their own progress and shows them how they can improve in terms of their National Curriculum targets.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - where possible, recruiting governors with wider experience and expertise to the governing body and ensuring that more governors are actively involved in monitoring, evaluating and improving the school
 - increasing communication with parents and carers to help them better understand and appreciate school changes and be more actively involved in their children's learning.