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14 September 2012

Mr P Tolley
Headteacher
Daven Primary School
New Street
Congleton
Cheshire
CW12 3AH

Dear Mr Tolley

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Daven 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 school's national leader in education, to the Chair of the Governing Body, the representative of the local authority and to the parents who came to school to talk to me, for giving their time at very short notice.

The school has seen changes since the inspection of 17 January 2012. Two teachers have left the school and one new teacher has been recruited. The governing body has a new Chair and vice-chair.

As a result of the inspection of 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.

The school acted with urgency to implement the recommendations following the notice to improve. As a consequence, two terms later, the pupils achieved significantly better results in the national end of Key Stage 2 tests than in previous years. Ninety percent of pupils reached the expected Level 4 in mathematics and in English, comfortably exceeding the government's floor targets for standards. In addition, 90% of pupils made or exceeded the expected progress in mathematics stipulated by the government as an expectation for all pupils. Pupils exceeded the challenging targets set for them by the school. A large proportion of the cohort taking the tests was in receipt of free school meals. Of this group, 92% attained the benchmark Level 4 in mathematics. Throughout the school, records show pupils in all years making accelerated progress.

The monitoring inspection took place a few days into the new school year. The new term has begun well. Pupils' behaviour was good. They were settling into their new classes well

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and good learning was taking place in the mathematics and English lessons observed. Pupils' work in exercise books was of a high quality, showing teachers are establishing high expectations of pupils and that pupils are sustaining the pride in their work seen in their workbooks from Easter 2012. Less effective learning in the past has left gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. For example, in mathematics, some pupils lack confidence in numeracy and lack understanding of what value numbers stand for when part of a large number. This makes it harder for pupils to make sense of more challenging mathematics in later years. The subject leader and staff are aware that gaps exist in mathematics and of the importance of pupils understanding what they learn and of plugging the gaps.

There have been major improvements to teaching; not just in mathematics, but across other subjects. The morale of teachers is high. They have taken the opportunities presented to see good practice in other schools. They have reflected on their own practice and listened to what consultants have shared with them. As a result, lessons now routinely display good features of effective teaching and learning. These include improved planning, better pace to lessons, more varied activities for pupils and many opportunities for them to make an active contribution. Pupils are set targets to reach in their work and pupils are also more involved in assessing how well they have understood the learning intention for each lesson. Work is now based on more accurate assessment of pupils' learning, although, inevitably so early after the summer holidays, teachers were still finding out more about their pupils' aptitudes and abilities. Records of visits by an independent consultant since the inspection of January 2012 show clear advances in teaching quality, with all teaching judged as good later in the summer term. The teaching of mathematics has changed radically. The curriculum is no longer based on progress through a commercial scheme but on the National Curriculum programmes of study for mathematics, informed by assessments of the level of pupils' understanding. In each class the range of pupils' ability is very wide and from a third to half of pupils finds learning difficult to a greater or lesser extent. In order to meet the pupils' learning needs better, more effective use of teaching assistants is being made to teach groups of pupils and to intervene when they are judged to be falling behind. The school is directing the extra funding available from the government, the pupil premium, to facilitate such interventions. This strategy appears to be working effectively.

The leadership and management of the school have improved at all levels. Traditional strengths in the quality of pastoral care and relationships have been maintained; the school has sustained the confidence of the parents and pupils continue to enjoy school as before. However, with the support of the local authority and the external support it has brokered, the leadership team and the governing body have restructured and both are robustly tackling issues to raise standards. The deputy headteacher has taken overall responsibility for the use of pupils' progress information to analyse the performance of each class. The headteacher monitors teaching quality through observations more thoroughly and discusses pupils' progress with each teacher in turn, so teachers more clearly know what is expected of them. Leadership responsibilities have been allocated to mathematics and for teaching and learning, in line with the school's development priorities. The governing body is under new leadership that brings wider experience and relevant experience of management to bear. With the support of a national leader in governance, governors are forging a more

independent and challenging role within the strategic decision making process, to hold the senior managers to account better and to refocus on standards and performance achieved by the school. Committees have been restructured, for example, to reflect the importance of teaching and learning, and the governing body is now at the stage of implementing the new policies it has agreed.

The support and challenge provided by the local authority has been instrumental in the school's improvement. Its statutory statement of action met requirements and provided a robust series of interventions to support improvement. All aspects of the authority's support plan have proved effective to date. In particular, the brokering of a leader in education from a neighbouring authority has helped senior management refocus on what is important. Staff have welcomed the opportunity to see and discuss practice that is already effective. The commitment to improvement can also be seen in the brokering of a national leader in governance with similarly promising early outcomes. Consultant support has been provided for mathematics and for teaching and learning; both consultants have made valued and important contributions to the school's development. Overseeing all of this, the local authority's officers have maintained a close scrutiny of improvement through regular meetings with the senior team and key governors. Overall, the local authority has provided support of very good quality to the school to raise standards and eradicate weaknesses.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mr Brian Padgett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise attainment and improve progress in mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2 by:
 - implementing effective strategies so that pupils can apply their mathematical knowledge and skills in challenging ways in order to improve their ability to solve problems
 - providing good opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their mathematical skills in meaningful contexts across the curriculum
 - embedding a broad and balanced mathematics curriculum which meets the learning needs of all pupils
 - further developing teachers' knowledge and expertise in teaching mathematics so that its quality significantly improves
 - increasing the pace at which leaders pursue further improvements in the provision of mathematics in order to improve the quality of provision and pupils' outcomes.