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Mrs P Dosanjh
Headteacher
Boxmoor Primary School
Cowper Road
Hemel Hempstead
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Dear Mrs Dosanjh

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Boxmoor Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 December 2012 and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the Chair of the Governing Body and the local authority representative for coming to talk to me at such short notice. As part of this visit, the procedures for safeguarding pupils were checked and found to meet requirements.

Since the inspection in April 2012, there have been a number of staff changes. A substantive headteacher was appointed in June 2012 and an acting deputy headteacher in September. The nursery teacher has left the school and a new head of the Early Years Foundation Stage appointed. Four members of staff plan to leave the school in December 2012 for personal reasons or to take up posts in other schools, and three teachers have been appointed to start in January 2013; the fourth post will be appointed before the end of term. The number of pupils on the school roll has not changed.

As a result of the inspection on 18–19 April 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 satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

After a period of declining pupil attainment in Year 6 over three years up to 2011, the achievement of pupils improved in the 2012 English and mathematics tests to above average. However, from their high attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 to their high attainment at the end of Year 6, this only represents satisfactory progress.

For a good school, attainment at the end of Year 6 should be even higher and all pupils should be making good progress from Year 2 to Year 6. A few pupils, notably those known to be in receipt of free school meals, make less progress than they should, especially in reading. There is currently insufficient impact of the additional government funding (pupil premium) on improving the progress these pupils make. Work observed during this monitoring visit, and the most recent school data, demonstrates that there has been a step change in teachers' and pupils' expectations across the school. The progress of all pupils is accelerating. This is because the quality of teaching is improving and leadership and management of the school have become more rigorous. Identified underperforming pupils are receiving more targeted support, either from teaching assistants or in specific group work with the class teacher during lessons.

There have been, and continue to be, a lot of staffing changes. It is hoped that staffing will become more stable in January 2013 with the arrival of new staff. On this monitoring visit, teachers in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 were jointly observed with the headteacher and acting deputy headteacher. No teaching was observed in the Early Years Foundation Stage as the previous inspection did not identify any issues in this part of the school. The overall quality of teaching is improving, albeit slowly, and now half is good or better, although there remain inconsistencies. At its best, pupils are challenged by rigorous questioning and the teacher checks regularly that pupils are making progress. The pace of learning is brisk and pupils are engaged in their learning, often sharing ideas with a partner. In the weaker lessons, the teacher still talks too much, does not sufficiently challenge all pupils and their questioning skills lack challenge and purpose. The learning objectives for the lesson are too broad and there are insufficient opportunities in lessons for teachers to check that pupils have understood the work. Work is not planned to meet the needs of all learners. For some, the work is too easy.

The headteacher and senior staff have had a stronger focus on supporting weaker teachers and by using 'lead teachers' from other schools. Whole-school training by the local authority has been effective; for example, in mathematics. Some teachers have visited a local outstanding school to observe high-quality teaching and they have incorporated some of their observations into their own teaching style. Individual teachers have also received targeted support from learning and teaching advisers from the local authority and this has had some impact. However, in some cases, improvement has been too slow and some teachers, despite support, have been unable to sustain improvements. Sometimes, teaching is good and sometimes it is inadequate. As a result, some pupils have a roller-coaster experience. In some classes, they are challenged, work hard, and achieve well. In other classes, pupils make slower progress, are not as rigorously challenged and have to catch up in the next class. Teachers' ability to use assessment to inform their planning is improving as a result of whole-staff training and more consistent marking of pupils' work. There has been an appropriate focus on regular half-termly pupil progress meetings, where class teachers discuss the progress of individual pupils with senior staff. There is still more work to do to ensure that the outcomes of these meetings lead to

focused intervention work that can demonstrate the impact of specific interventions on pupils' achievement. For example, if a child is identified as being behind with their reading and, subsequently, receives additional reading support, what is the impact of this support on their reading ability? Did it make a difference?

The leadership and management of the school have improved since the arrival of the new headteacher in June 2012. Along with the internally appointed acting deputy headteacher, they have acted on the issues identified at the last inspection and, with the support of the local authority District School Effectiveness Adviser (DSEA), are improving the quality of teaching and the rate of pupils' progress. The headteacher has high expectations. All teachers are now regularly observed and rigorously held to account. The issues identified are used to create individual and whole-school priorities for improving teaching. Performance management has been given a higher profile. Action planning is now more robust, although there are not sufficient termly milestones or specific measurable success criteria to be of use to the governing body to be able to hold the headteacher to account for improvement in teaching quality. For example, what proportion of the teaching is going to be outstanding by Christmas? how much by Easter? what has been the impact of specific whole-school training on teaching quality? and so on. The use of pupil progress data is developing following the introduction of a new system, although data is not collected frequently enough to be able to inform management action and provide timely support to those pupils most in need. The governing body have received some effective support from the local authority that enables them to begin to ask more challenging questions, be more accountable and hold the headteacher to account.

Since the last inspection, support from the local authority has been well-targeted at the key issues from the last inspection. This has included English and mathematics learning and teaching advisers working with staff, helping them with their planning and assessment, directing them to training courses, and establishing links with a local outstanding school. The DSEA visits the school regularly to check up and, along with the local authority Action Group, challenges school leaders and holds them to account for teaching and pupil outcomes. The new headteacher has received good support. The local authority statement of action, and action plan, are fit for purpose and detailed. However, it does not contain enough measurable targets to aim for each term with a specific focus on improving key aspects of teaching.

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

Clive Kempton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise the quality and consistency of teaching to accelerate progress and improve achievement in Key Stages 1 and 2, by ensuring that:
 - tasks are carefully matched to the different needs and abilities of all pupils and especially those who are more able
 - stimulating activities are planned in lessons that excite pupils, make best use of ICT and engage pupils fully in their learning.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - teaching and learning are monitored with greater frequency and rigour
 - action plans include clearly identified areas for improvement that can be successfully measured against outcomes for pupils
 - achievement data are monitored with rigour to support accurate self-evaluation
 - the role of the governing body in asking challenging questions of school leaders is strengthened.