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Mrs S Millhouse
Headteacher
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Winchester Avenue
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Dear Mrs Millhouse

IMPLEMENTATION OF WEDDINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN

Following my visit to your school on 11 and 12 July 2005, I write to confirm the findings and to notify you of the outcomes.

As you know, the inspection was part of a policy involving a broader series of visits by HMI and Additional Inspectors to check on the development and improvement of schools where the section 10 inspection indicated that the school was underachieving. You will recall that the aims of the visit were to assess the progress made in addressing and eliminating underachievement, meeting the targets given in the action plan, evaluating standards of achievement and the quality of education, especially in relation to areas of underachievement.

During the visit I inspected ten lessons or part lessons; attended a registration period and an assembly; scrutinised a wide range of documentation provided by the school; and held discussions with yourself and nominated staff on the causes and areas of underachievement. I also examined a range of pupils' work and spoke informally with other staff and pupils.

On the basis of the evidence gathered during the visit, I made the following observations to you, the deputy headteacher, the chair of governors and a representative of the LEA.

This large primary school had its section 10 inspection in March 2004 when it was judged to be underachieving. The pupils who were deaf and those who had

speech and language difficulties achieved well; the pupils in reception and Key Stage 1 also achieved well. However, by the end of Key Stage 2 achievement was judged only satisfactory. The pupils' standards were only average from average starting points on entry to reception. Groups of higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 2, and particularly those in Year 6, did not do as well as they could in English and mathematics. Staff absence and turnover had been high and had affected the quality of teaching, the continuity of the pupils' work, and the management of the key stage. The current picture is of a school where the headteacher and leadership team are demonstrating a capacity to improve but where the pace of improvement has been slow initially.

Compared with all schools, the 2004 national tests results at the end of Year 2 were average, although they were less good than in previous years. They were below average when compared with schools with a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals. This reflected the make up of the particular cohort of pupils. The results at the higher National Curriculum level (Level 3) were above the national average. The trend in results compared with schools nationally was broadly average. The outcomes of the Year 6 tests were much improved compared with previous years and results were above the national average. In English they were well above average and in mathematics and science they were above average. The trend in results was upwards compared with the national picture. Compared with schools which scored similarly in their Key Stage 1 tests, the results were well above average. At the higher level, Level 5, the results were well above average in English, above average in mathematics and average in science. A particular feature of the results was that the girls outperformed boys in Years 2 and 6 in English, although results were relatively evenly matched in mathematics and science. The data showed that the value the school added to Year 6 pupils' standards from the time they were in Year 2 was above the national average and for similar schools.

The unconfirmed results from the 2005 national tests and assessments indicate that, compared with 2004, these have improved for Year 2 pupils but are less strong, and more typical of previous years, for pupils in Year 6. The results at the higher level (Level 5) are also less high. This reflects to some extent the needs and abilities of the pupils in this year's Year 6 cohort. The attainment seen in lessons and from the pupils' work was largely average in Key Stage 2, and was generally above average in Key Stage 1.

Pupils made satisfactory or better progress in all lessons seen and in three lessons their progress was good. The good progress made was because the teachers had suitably high expectations and the pupils were challenged with work which was well matched to their needs.

The school has had difficulty setting suitably challenging, whole-school targets over previous years. Sometimes the targets were too challenging and, occasionally, they were not challenging enough. This was because its assessment systems were not secure and the information that the school had was not used to best effect. This is now improving. The teachers' assessments are more accurate, the pupils' progress is regularly tracked and information is now being used to aid planning. For instance, in the recent tests, teachers' Key Stage 2 assessments showed a fair degree of match with test results. It was only in writing where there was a considerable mismatch. Here, the teachers identified 70 per cent of their pupils working at or above the expected level, whereas in the tests only 55 per cent of pupils achieved this level. The staff have worked hard on developing target-setting for individual pupils based on National Curriculum levelled criteria. This is due for full implementation in September 2005.

The school is now making reasonable use of statistical data, especially the estimated levels pupils might achieve from their previous performance. The quality of the school's analysis of its results is satisfactory and patterns and trends have been adequately identified. As a result, much time and effort have been put into forming and teaching specific groups for pupils who need extra help. In addition, setting in mathematics is clearly based on an analysis of pupils' performance and a positive feature is that groups can be 'fluid' depending on how pupils are doing in a particular topic. Overall, the school is much better informed about the pupils' progress and attainment and supports most pupils effectively. However, there is less support for the more able pupils.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour were good. Most pupils were enthusiastic learners who were interested in their lessons. In a few lessons in Key Stage 2 a very small number of boys became restless and talked when the teacher was talking. The school's behaviour code was implemented well and consistently. The pupils understood what was required of them in terms of how they should behave and the consequences of any negative actions. As a result, there were few behaviour difficulties. Pupils' attendance is good.

In the ten lessons seen, teaching was good in three and satisfactory in the rest. Overall, the teachers made good use of the three-part lesson structure and generally checked well, at the ends of lessons, what the pupils had learned. Occasionally, introductions were too long and left only a short time for pupils to engage in practical work. Teachers are now taking greater account of the ways pupils learn, and plan lessons adequately to ensure the needs of all learners are taken into account. Although teachers plan activities which are mostly adequately matched for the different ability groups in their class, they do not always clearly identify what each group is to learn. Individual or group targets are not always

referred to. In addition, the staff do not always challenge the higher attaining pupils sufficiently.

Good use of the interactive whiteboard was made in Key Stage 1; this engaged the pupils very well and the demonstrations enhanced the pupils' understanding of some complex ideas. Elsewhere, there was little use of such equipment or of computers in general, to support pupils' learning. During the practical part of all lessons, teaching assistants were used well and they made an effective contribution to pupils' learning. However, it was only in Key Stage 1 where they were used efficiently at other times. In one lesson in Key Stage 2, strengths only just outweighed weaknesses. The pedantic, lack lustre, approach of ensuring all pupils had completed their work before the next step slowed the pace of the lesson and the higher attaining pupils' learning. Occasionally, staff do not always ensure that the pupils with hearing difficulties are positioned so they can easily see the teacher and the person who is signing.

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. After a slow start, mainly because of staffing difficulties, the school's actions are now gaining momentum. The LEA's support for the school has been good and the acceleration in the pace is partly as a response to the careful monitoring and advice by LEA personnel. The headteacher has recently taken adequate steps to improve practice and to put more rigour and pace into the school's work generally and assessment and target setting, in particular. The school's plan is satisfactory and there is also an adequate plan to raise the pupils' achievement. Occasionally in the school's plan, the priorities have not always been in step with what has been needed. For instance, improvement in teachers' planning, with objectives identified for all ability groups, was not one of the first priorities for school improvement. In addition, there is little said about improving boys' attainment in English, although the senior leadership team has strategies in place to tackle this.

The instability in staffing has had a significant impact on the decisions and priorities that have been made within the school. The lack of a leader in Key Stage 2, the difficulty in recruiting and other changes in key staff led to this slow development initially. A 'caretaker' manager (prior to the permanent appointment of an experienced leader in September 2005) has been well supported by the senior leadership team. As a result, there are clear lines of responsibility for the work in Key Stage 2. The impact of the work of the senior leadership team has significantly improved as has the input of its members into the key areas for improvement. This has been through the training these staff have received as part of the primary leadership and the 'leading from the middle' programmes. They now take the lead in collecting and analysing data, action planning and holding staff to account for standards. Evaluations of teaching have been carried out by subject leaders and by the headteacher and there is a recognition that the teaching needs to challenge the

higher attaining pupils even more. However, the monitoring is not always sufficiently evaluative so that staff know where they stand with regard to the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching although they do receive useful and practical advice following such observations.

The governors are now taking a more proactive role in finding out about the school's work and influencing improvement. The chair of governors attends LEA monitoring meetings of the school's performance and is knowledgeable about the school's situation. Governors have visited classes with a focus on the areas they have delegated responsibility for, such as literacy. They now have a better understanding about the quality of the school's work. However, the minutes of their meeting show that their main focus is mainly on finance and staffing with little mention of quality of teaching, pupils' standards or leadership and management of specific subjects or areas. However, some leaders are now reporting to the governing body on work in their subjects and this is helping them to be more informed about developments. The self-evaluation they have undertaken has helped immensely to identify the weaknesses they have in their own knowledge and where they need training to improve, such as their ability to hold the school to account for its performance.

EVALUATION OF PROGRESS:

The school is making reasonable progress towards raising pupils' attainment and eliminating underachievement, although a slow start was made initially.

In relation to the action plan and the impact of actions taken, reasonable progress has been made in addressing the key tasks which relate to the school's underachievement.

I am copying this letter to the chair of governors and the County Education Officer for Warwickshire. This letter will also be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

GEORGE DERBY
Additional inspector

cc chair of governors
LEA