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Miss Alison Dakin
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Dear Miss Dakin

OFSTED MONITORING OF SCHOOLS WITH NOTICE TO IMPROVE

Thank you for the help that you and your staff gave when I visited your school on 14 June 2006, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information that you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my particular thanks to members of staff and pupils with whom I held discussions and to your local authority school improvement partner who made the time to visit me.

The visit considered progress on each of the three issues for improvement from the school's inspection on 29 and 30 November 2005. These related to: raising the standards that pupils achieve; improving the effectiveness of senior managers and subject leaders enabling them to support the drive to raise the quality of provision; and continuing the recent successful improvements to the quality of teaching so that pupils recover the ground they have lost.

Having considered carefully all the evidence presented by the school and the local authority, together with evidence from Ofsted data, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress on each of the issues. The imminent changes in staffing and the effects of the school's proposed amalgamation have made this improvement more difficult to achieve, and put at risk sustaining this development. However, the headteacher and local authority have already implemented well thought out plans to minimise any possible negative impact associated with staff changes and proposed amalgamation.

A key feature that underpins the improvement in the standards that pupils achieve in both Years 2 and 6 is the impact of the newly appointed headteacher (January 2006). Her good leadership and the introduction of target setting have promoted higher expectations for all. This increased intervention and target setting has also led to greater pupil and parent involvement in learning. These activities have been well supported and coordinated by the local authority.



The school has willingly accepted their advice and made changes in what it does, for example in how it teaches reading. As a result, standards in Year 2 are significantly higher than in 2005, especially in reading and mathematics, and these pupils have made good progress this year. Teacher predictions for pupils in Year 6 indicate that far more pupils are likely to reach or exceed the standards expected for their ages than in 2005. This year, these pupils have made very good progress. Pupils' progress in other year groups has not improved as dramatically due to staffing difficulties.

There has been close involvement in local programmes to develop school leaders and the school has had good support from staff in nearby schools. As a result, the subject leaders for English and mathematics now make a positive impact. They have readily accepted the support made available, especially that of the headteacher, and have firmly grasped the responsibility to lead their subjects and bring about improvement. The outcome is seen in the much better standards reached by pupils in reading and mathematics. These subject leaders now have the skills, and the growing confidence, to evaluate accurately how well their subject is doing and plan the best way to raise achievement further.

Building on the acting headteacher's successes in the autumn term, the school has eradicated the weakest teaching and put in quality support to help pupils catch up. In some year groups, this is more evident in their personal development than in the academic studies. Further support from the local authority in the form of an Advanced Skills Teacher has made a significant impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' desire to learn. The very thorough monitoring and support provided by the headteacher, and increasingly through subject coordinators, has helped improve pupils' learning. This support has also enabled teachers to improve their skills in matching work to pupils' differing abilities and to provide more exciting and relevant activities for them to do.

The local authority's 'Statement of Action', backed up with regular monitoring reports, gives a comprehensive and lucid plan of the actions to be taken to help remove the Notice to Improve. The statement is closely linked to the school improvement plan and addresses the school's uncertain future.

Again, my thanks for your help and my good wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Watson AI
Lead Inspector