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25 May 2006

Mr Bell  
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Dear Mr Bell

### **OFSTED MONITORING OF SCHOOLS WITH NOTICE TO IMPROVE**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I visited your school on 24 May 2006, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass on my particular thanks to those children and staff who met with me and to your chair of governors for the time he gave.

Discussions were held with yourself, the two assistant headteachers, assessment manager, learning mentors and local authority inspector. Five lessons were observed, pupils' workbooks and a selection of the school's documentation scrutinised and informal discussions held with staff and pupils.

Having considered carefully all the evidence presented by the school and the local authority, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress overall on the issues identified at the last inspection.

As a result of its inspection in January 2006 the school was asked to look at three matters: using assessment information more systematically to improve pupils' progress and achievement; ensuring teaching accelerates pupils' learning; and sharpening the monitoring of teaching.

The school has produced a good quality action plan which addresses each of the areas for improvement, along with other priorities which it has identified for itself. The Headteacher and the staff are making a determined effort to make headway.

The school now has a straightforward system for checking pupils' progress based on regular assessments in reading, writing and mathematics. There is a clear analysis of children's attainment and experiences when they enter the Foundation Stage which is built upon systematically throughout the next two key stages. The assessment process has drawn extensively on expertise provided by the local authority especially in the setting up of efficient practices, the analysis of data, and checking on the accuracy of the teachers' judgements through moderation exercises.

Half termly assessments now take place and the results are recorded on 'Cohort Trackers' – charts which record the progress of each pupil in the year group classes. By these means teachers determine what levels pupils reach and can set new targets. The subject coordinators hold regular meetings with the class teachers to look at subject specific issues, while the assessment manager oversees the correct use of the procedures. A new marking system has also been introduced. All these measures are at an early stage of development, and there is a healthy attitude amongst senior teachers to 'get it right'.

The next steps, however, will be crucial to the success of the areas for development related to teaching. As yet there is a lack of consistency in how teachers use assessment data to plan their work, identify gaps in learning, and employ good teaching methods to improve pupils' progress. The full benefits which could accrue from the work on assessment are currently being hampered by variations in the accuracy with which work is matched to the different groups of pupils. Erratic marking, overlong periods of time teaching some subjects makes it difficult to stimulate the pupils' interests. For example one and three quarter hours teaching a literacy and reading lesson; and reorganising pupils into ability classes for literacy and numeracy but without sufficient variations in the work provided. The pace of pupils' learning is also impeded by some late starts to lessons.

The senior leadership team is aware of many of these issues and is trying to identify the best ways forward; for example, some year group teachers are beginning to plan together; teachers in the Reception classes and Year 1 classes have attended a 'transition between key stages' course; and subject teams have been set up to draw on expertise and interest. Specialist teachers and consultants from the local authority provide regular support and there are plans to review how the whole curriculum is organised and taught.

Underpinning all these measures is a monitoring programme to check on progress. This programme has the potential to identify weaknesses.

However, the school now needs to prioritise its actions, especially to raise the quality of teaching from its current level and to ensure assessment procedures have a greater impact on pupils' progress.

The school has received strong support from the local authority. Its statement of action is clear and analytical.

Yours sincerely

Roger Hartley HMI