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Mrs Lindsey Weimers
The Headteacher
Windmill Primary School
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Dear Mrs Weimers

OFSTED MONITORING OF SCHOOLS WITH NOTICE TO IMPROVE

Thank you for the information you gave me before I inspected your school on 2 November 2006 and for your help in drawing up my schedule for the day so that I could make good use of the limited time available. I would be grateful if you would pass on my thanks to the staff and the pupils and in particular to the three core subject co-ordinators with whom I had meetings, the Key Stage 2 teachers and teaching assistants whose lessons I observed and the members of the School Council who came to talk to me at lunch-time.

The school's Deputy Head left at the end of last summer term. The Local Authority (LA) has helpfully supplied an Acting Deputy Head from their School Improvement Advisory Team to work in the school for four days a week. Since you will also be leaving the school at the end of this term, she will provide an important link. I am sorry not to have had the opportunity to meet her. I hope that she is now fully recovered from her illness. I was particularly pleased that the new Head Teacher designate was able to come to the feedback and that you will be working closely with her over the coming weeks to review priorities.

As a result of the inspection on 2 May 2006 the school was asked to raise standards and achievement for pupils in Years 3 to 6; improve the quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6 so that pupils make rapid progress; and ensure subject leaders are effective in their roles.

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.

The progress in raising the standards and achievement in English and mathematics of Key Stage 2 pupils is good, and in science is satisfactory. The results of the 2006 tests in year 6 show improvements in all three subjects on 2005 results, which were themselves an improvement on 2004, the first year in which the school had pupils in Year 6. In July 2006 the school made a detailed and useful analysis of the Year 6 results and of the optional tests in Years 3, 4 and 5. Although English results were already at the national average in 2005 and improved further in 2006, the school identified a relative weakness in writing, particularly among the boys. In mathematics, the proportion reaching level 4 or above increased substantially in 2006 to around the national figure, though later scrutiny of papers showed relative weaknesses in data-handling and problem solving. The co-ordinators for these subjects have used their analysis well to put in place clear strategies for improving weaknesses and to identify pupils not making the expected progress so that intervention programmes can start earlier this year. There are regular assessments now taking place throughout the year which will enable the co-ordinators to keep track of the progress of individual pupils and to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies for improvement.

The July analysis clearly identified the need to increase the number of pupils reaching higher levels in science. The co-ordinator has good strategies planned, but progress has been slower than in English and mathematics because science has not been given sufficient priority. The co-ordinator was not given time to lead a staff meeting until this week and it is disappointing that the LA have still not identified a partner school where science is a strength, although the LA action plan said this would be done by July. The school has now used its own initiative to establish a link with a nearby school. Nevertheless, in spite of the delay in getting the strategies under way, I observed some good science teaching which was extending and challenging the thinking of the more able pupils.

There has been good progress in improving the quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 and this is having a beneficial impact on raising standards. My observations of teaching confirmed the evidence gathered through the school's own monitoring that the teaching in Key Stage 2 is never less than satisfactory and often good. I saw particularly good teaching in Year 5, and heard from the pupils how the teaching and learning has improved considerably for their cohort this year. The re-allocation of teachers to year groups that took place in September has been a major factor in improving quality. All year groups now include at least one experienced and effective teacher who is able to give support to their less experienced or less effective colleagues through joint planning. Lesson observations and monitoring of books by senior teachers take place regularly and result in feedback and action. While some teachers are still in need of support, the structures are working well in all year groups except for Year 4 where some pupils are finding it difficult to cope with so many different teachers.

As far as the development of the subject leaders is concerned, I am not in a position to evaluate progress fully. I was unable to talk to the Deputy, who has a lead role in this respect. It was also impractical to meet the co-ordinators of all the subjects. However, the meetings that I had with the co-ordinators for English, mathematics and science showed that they have all clearly identified what needs to be done to raise standards in their subject and are working effectively with their colleagues to bring about improvement. The school now needs to establish priorities between subjects more clearly so that the different co-ordinators can be given suitable allocations of time to carry out their work.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Schenk
Her Majesty's Inspector