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15 June 2007

Mr R Edwards
Headteacher
Farnham Primary School
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Dear Mr Edwards

Ofsted Monitoring of Schools with Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 14 June 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Would you please pass on my thanks to the pupils I spoke to at lunchtime and in the classes I visited. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection on 11 and 12 September 2006, the school was asked to:

- address the slow rate of progress and raise standards and achievement to enable all pupils to do as well as they can
- ensure that the monitoring of teaching and learning is fully effective so that it improves the pace of learning and progress
- use information from assessment more effectively to improve teaching and learning and raise achievement.

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 and in raising the pupils' achievements.

Pupils enter the school at age 3 with levels of development well below those typically expected at this age. The vast majority of pupils are learning English as an additional language (EAL). Nearly all pupils are from Asian British backgrounds, although there has been a marked increase in the number of pupils from Eastern Europe during the last year, particularly in Key Stage 2. This places an additional pressure on EAL provision, which the school and local authority are currently discussing and seeking solutions for. The school has also noted an increase in the number of pupils entering or leaving the school at times other than the start of the school year.

The validated data for 2006 confirmed that the achievement of pupils in Years 1 and 2 was satisfactory in reading, writing and mathematics when compared to similar pupils nationally. Progress improved particularly in writing. Standards in the 2007 Key Stage 1 national tests are expected to rise, according to a recent moderation of assessments. Standards in Key Stage 2, particularly in science, were well below national expectations in 2006 showing that pupils' progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 was inadequate. However, the school's most recent assessment information indicates that the rate of progress is beginning to accelerate and underachievement is reducing. Standards are therefore rising and most pupils' achievement is now satisfactory, given their low starting points. Progress in science and mathematics, in particular, has accelerated as a result of the impact of the school's improvement initiatives.

This improving picture in relation to standards and attainment reflects improvements in the quality and pace of teaching and learning. The outcomes from more rigorous assessment are used to good effect to inform actions for improvement. Planning for improvement is strong and progress against actions and targets is monitored and reviewed regularly so that impact can be measured. Actions are revised swiftly where necessary. For example, booster sessions were held twice weekly after school from October and during Easter for Year 6 pupils. Assessment information shows this has accelerated progress. Pupils' attendance at booster sessions was 100%, demonstrating their enjoyment and the increasing involvement and commitment of their parents. Staff volunteered for these activities from across the school. Evaluation indicates that, as a result, staff have a clear understanding of their roles and of the progress pupils are making across the whole school.

Well considered professional development activities, aligned to improvement plans and priorities, have been undertaken by the full range of staff. Professional discussions are held with all staff. These are providing consistent messages related to expected levels of progress and attainment in all key stages. Peer support and individual staff self-assessment are working well to inform planning and professional development. The leadership team and the staff as a whole are increasingly taking on board the need for constructive challenge, as well as support, in order to secure improvement. Lesson observations are systematically undertaken, although summative judgements are not recorded in a way which reflects the national inspection framework.

The school accurately judges the quality of teaching and learning to be satisfactory overall but with an increasing proportion of teaching which is good or better. This represents an improvement since September 2006. Teaching assistants contribute well to lessons. Display space is well used throughout the school and in the majority of classrooms to reinforce learning and target setting. Some rooms, however, do not lend themselves readily to this. A whole-school approach to lesson planning and assessment for learning is used consistently in all classes. Social and emotional aspects of learning help to celebrate learning and ensure staff and pupils receive consistent messages. Monitoring of teaching and learning informs pupils' learning

needs and target setting, although this requires further refinement and increased pupil participation. The quality of marking is variable. It does not always provide useful feedback to help pupils improve because it focuses too much on presentation and effort. Nevertheless, the pace of most lessons has improved and pupils are more actively engaged – as the 1.7% increase in attendance over the last two terms attests. Pupils are increasingly working together collaboratively, thinking for themselves and contributing to their own learning. Consequently pupils' self-confidence, initiative and independence are growing and they are developing the skills and abilities which will contribute to their future economic well-being.

The headteacher and the senior leadership team share responsibilities well and have worked with a supportive and reinvigorated staff team to drive forward the school's improvement work. Despite some shortcomings related to the School Improvement Service statement of action, the school has received good practical support. All of the adults are working towards improvement. Pupils are extremely well behaved, eager to learn, and are starting to respond well to the changes in the culture and ethos in the learning environment. This is beginning to raise expectations and aspirations about what can be achieved throughout the school community.

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

Yours sincerely

Wendy Ripley
Her Majesty's Inspector