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Ms Amanda Turner
The Headteacher
Davies Lane Primary School
Davies Lane
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Dear Ms Turner

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 12 December 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 thanks to everyone who met with me.

As a result of the June 2006 inspection, the school was asked to make improvements on four issues: standards in English, mathematics and science for pupils in Years 3 to 6; strategies to reduce absence; the quality of teaching and learning, particularly the use of assessment, so that activities meet all pupils' needs; and the provision of sufficiently stimulating activities in the curriculum to fully engage pupils' effort and imagination.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement.

Since the inspection, the school has introduced more accurate and frequent systems for assessing pupils' progress. This careful monitoring of pupils' work has provided a sharper focus on matching teaching to pupils' needs. It has also led to suitably targeted support for staff which has contributed to improve teaching that meets pupils' needs more effectively. However, the school recognises that for some classes the improvement has not been sufficient. Adept staffing decisions have already led to some improvements in learning. There are sound plans for next term for further strategic deployment of staff and the appointment of two new senior staff members. The causes of pupils' underperformance are being addressed soundly through both staffing and professional development. Monitoring of teaching provides some

evidence of improvement in meeting pupils' needs. However, it is not frequent enough or across the range of subjects.

For Year 6 pupils, progress this term is at least satisfactory and their standards in English, mathematics and science are rising. There is still some way to go to eradicate their underachievement in previous years to enable them to reach the standards they are capable of by the end of Year 6. At this early stage in developing the accuracy of the assessment system, the records for Years 3 to 5 also indicate at least satisfactory progress in the parts of the core curriculum that have been met this term. Pupils' work shows that their progress is linked to the quality of teaching.

Pupils report that the science curriculum is much more engaging this term with greater opportunity for them to carry out experiments. Many pupils were keenly involved in making predictions and testing them. The school has recently improved the provision of practical equipment for science and mathematics but it is too soon to gauge its impact on the curriculum. There have been significant changes in lesson planning, which now builds firmly on national guidance and provides pupils with a broad curriculum in the core subjects. Teachers have planned more activities within a real context but opportunities are missed to bring learning alive and involve pupils actively. Temporary staffing arrangements have provided art and physical education lessons this term that pupils have particularly enjoyed. Good practice from the Foundation Stage is being extended into Key Stage 1 where the curriculum is now more varied. Improvement in the provision of stimulating activities is satisfactory and the school acknowledges that there is room for more consistent planning of engaging activities into lessons across the curriculum.

The school has implemented a sound range of strategies to reduce absence. They have communicated with parents whose pupils have particularly poor attendance and achieved marked improvements in some of these cases. The fortnightly newsletter showing attendance for each class and messages about the impact of absence has effectively raised awareness and led to keenness to have good attendance. Nevertheless, the school's monitoring of attendance has not been sharp enough to ensure that attendance has improved overall upon last year; it has remained roughly the same.

The impact of the support from the local authority is satisfactory. Prior to the June 2006 inspection, the school was receiving support. After the inspection, this was immediately sharpened for numeracy and literacy, but not as rapidly for science. The quality of consultancy support has led to improvements but the quantity of support and reporting outlined in the local authority's statement of action has not been provided, and opportunities for sharing information to enable greater focus on steps towards improvement have been missed. The local authority's statement of action just fulfils requirements. Whilst the criteria for success are stated clearly, the milestones and measurable outcomes for judging the impact of each element of support are not specified.

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

Yours sincerely

Gill Close
Her Majesty's Inspector