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Mrs S Taylor
The Headteacher
Stone St Mary's C of E Primary School
Hayes Road
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Dear Mrs Taylor

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 25 April 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the governors, staff and pupils who spoke to me and helped me with my work.

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 14 and 15 September 2006, the school was asked to:

- raise standards by ensuring that teachers set more challenging work so that more is demanded of pupils in lessons
- give pupils clearer guidance on what they need to do to improve their work
- better match activities to children's needs in the Reception Year so that, step by step, they can build on what they learn.

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.

Standards are rising and the gap between the expectation of what pupils should achieve and their actual attainment is narrowing. However, despite this improvement, many pupils' attainment remains below the expectation for their ages.

Analysis of the school's records and scrutiny of the pupils' work show that a majority of pupils are making satisfactory progress and that the overall rate of progress has improved since the inspection in September 2006. The school has good systems to track the progress that pupils make and has reliable data from which future progress can be measured. Pupils now have challenging targets which in most cases are well matched to their needs and prior attainment. However, although these targets are displayed prominently in classrooms, a minority of pupils are not sure exactly what they have to do to achieve them. Class teachers have increasing responsibility for monitoring the progress that pupils make towards their targets and for tackling any underachievement. They use assessment information to help plan the pupils' next steps for learning so that the needs of all pupils are met. This is becoming a key feature of teachers' planning, but it is not yet done equally well in all classes and this means that some pupils are not enabled to do as well as they should.

Good support from local authority advisers and rigorous monitoring of lessons, followed by appropriate feedback and opportunities for teachers to observe teaching and learning in other schools, have resulted in good improvements in the overall profile of teaching, which is now similar to that seen in most schools. The Foundation Stage curriculum has been reviewed and revised so that there is a greater range of opportunities for learning in the Reception classes. A computer based system for recording and reporting on Reception children's achievements has been introduced so that teachers are now well informed about the children's progress and can ensure that it is continual. These measures have resulted in a significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage.

Leadership and management are good. Governors and the senior leadership team have not been complacent and have vigorously sought to bring about improvement to address the areas of weakness identified by the last inspection. Governors have undertaken training and are better informed and now more able to challenge the school to improve.

The local authority has provided good support for the school and the work of the school improvement partner and local authority advisers, consultants and an advanced skills teacher has had a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and opportunities for learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis
Her Majesty's Inspector