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19 June 2007

Ms Robyn Wisbey
The Headteacher
Standen Barns Primary School
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Dear Ms Wisbey

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 6 June 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit.

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 7 and 8 November 2006, the school was asked to improve the pupils' progress in English and mathematics in Years 1 to 4. In particular, improvements were required in teaching, guidance to pupils about how to improve their work, and the rigour and impact of monitoring carried out by the senior team.

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 and in raising the pupils' achievements.

The recent statutory assessments of reading and mathematics in Year 2 indicate that most pupils have made broadly satisfactory progress from the point they reached at the end of the Foundation Stage. Although the school has identified that fewer pupils than expected reached Level 3 in reading, the proportion of pupils working securely at the above average Level 2a or higher matches projections based on the foundation scores. Results were not available for writing. In Years 3 and 4, the pupils have recently taken the optional national tests but these have not yet been marked. The school's rudimentary analysis of the pupils' progress based on teachers' assessments during the year is inconclusive. Standards of work in the pupils' books are below average in writing and there is a clear legacy of underachievement, for instance in the quality of spelling. However, there are also promising signs of

improving confidence and understanding from the pupils in the way they approach written tasks.

The school has focused successfully on improving aspects of teaching. Its own monitoring indicates that inadequate teaching has been eradicated and this view was supported by my own observations. Strengths in Years 5 and 6 and the Foundation Stage have been maintained whilst significant developments have taken place in Years 1 to 4. The departure of one member of staff at Key Stage 1 has resulted in some well managed reshuffling of teachers and classes and the creation of effective and supportive teams. Literacy and numeracy at Key Stage 1 are now taught to pupils in ability groupings which enable teachers to focus sharply on matching work to levels of attainment, although it does hinder some aspects of joint planning. At both Key Stage 1 and Years 3 and 4, lesson objectives are rooted in high expectations and lessons are purposeful, well focused and soundly managed. In several instances, however, teachers tried to incorporate too much into lessons and made tasks more complicated than required.

A new marking policy is being applied consistently across the school. Pupils receive detailed and helpful comments about their work and there is a high degree of clarity about the criteria for success. All lessons in the core subjects are referenced to the discrete steps the pupils need to make towards achieving specific levels of attainment. Self-assessment is also being strongly encouraged.

Monitoring of teaching is regular and rigorous. Detailed records are made of each observation and the teachers receive pertinent points for development. Any examples of significant weakness have been followed up appropriately. Monitoring might now usefully concentrate on a few whole-school issues, such as developing the quality of questioning in plenary sessions, as well as on evaluating the overall quality of lessons. Apart from the literacy coordinator, who is also the deputy headteacher, subject coordinators have not been involved to any great extent in monitoring standards of work or analysing trends in performance.

Although the section 5 inspection did not identify assessment and tracking as an area for improvement, the school has rightly sought to develop its procedures. It has not made as much headway as it desired and the senior team recognises there are flaws in the way it is attempting to evaluate progress. In order to be better placed to analyse its performance, the school needs with urgency to remedy this situation.

The local authority has provided satisfactory support. The school speaks highly of the encouragement and training it has received from various advisers and consultants. Most impact can be discerned in the improvements to the quality of teaching. However, the local authority has been slow to identify the weaknesses in the school's strategy for improving assessment and evaluation and should have acted more vigorously to ensure that the school's systems were fit for purpose.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. I appreciate that the school's efforts to respond to the inspection report have taken place against the backdrop of a disruptive building programme. You and all the staff have coped well with the extra stresses this has caused.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Hubbleday". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.

Rob Hubbleday
Her Majesty's Inspector