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15 June 2007

The Headteacher  
Malcolm Sargent Primary School  
Empingham Road  
Stamford  
Lincolnshire  
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Dear Mrs Young

### 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, 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 pupils and to the members of the governing body who contributed to the inspection.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

As a result of the inspection on 22 - 23 November 2006, the school was asked to improve its use of systems for tracking pupils' progress to ensure that their needs are met effectively. The school was also asked to develop comprehensive systems to monitor and evaluate the work of the school, particularly the quality of teaching and learning. Since its previous inspection, the headteacher has resigned and left the school. The school is now being led by an interim headteacher provided by the Local Authority. Nevertheless, 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.

At the time of the previous inspection, systems for tracking pupils' progress were embryonic. They are now fully embedded and staff have access to a wealth of performance data about pupils throughout school. The deputy headteacher, who has led this initiative, has been rigorous in ensuring that agreed cycles of assessment are completed by all staff. He has also provided necessary training and moderation exercises to ensure that their assessments are increasingly consistent and accurate. Senior staff have made good use of this information in relation to the current Year 6. They quickly identified pupils of all abilities who were at risk of underachieving and took effective steps to address this. The result was that the profile of pupils' progress improved markedly over the last six months and there are now clear indications that, during their time in Key Stage 2, most have made at least the progress that they should have done and, for some, progress has been good. This has been achieved by raising the expectations of all staff, by ensuring that the work set for pupils is suitably challenging and by ensuring that pupils know exactly what to do in order to improve. The focus on developing pupils' thinking skills has been another important factor in improving progress. It has made lessons more stimulating and enjoyable

and, along with a concerted 'push' on targets for improvement, has motivated pupils to succeed. Tasks are generally matched satisfactorily to pupils' prior attainments but this aspect of teachers' practice is not yet consistently effective throughout the school. Reliable performance data has also enabled the school to make more effective use of support staff to boost the performance of identified pupils of all abilities, both in lessons and in groups effectively targeted for extra help.

In relation to the requirement to make good use of systems for tracking pupils' progress to ensure that their needs are met effectively, the school has made good progress.

The school has also made some progress in improving its arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the quality of education that it provides. Subject leaders, supported by Local Authority advisory staff and consultants, are undertaking planned monitoring activities every week. This work, along with the school's well focused analysis of performance data, is giving them a clearer picture of quality and standards in their subjects and is beginning to improve the quality of teaching and learning in some areas. However, this considerable volume of monitoring information has not been collated to form a coherent whole-school picture, which clearly identifies the key priorities beyond those identified by the previous inspection. Consequently, the school's current development plan is almost entirely devoted to short term initiatives and is not sufficiently detailed or forward looking. The task of co-ordinating the school's monitoring activities, along with efforts by the governors to improve their oversight of the school by gathering more first-hand information about aspects of its work, has been impeded by the recent resignation and departure of the headteacher. The school is now being led by an experienced and able interim headteacher. In partnership with her deputy and other senior staff, she is already reviewing the school's progress since its last inspection and is forming a clear view of the way ahead.

In relation to the requirement to develop comprehensive systems to monitor and evaluate the work of the school, particularly the quality of teaching and learning, the school has made satisfactory progress.

The school has received good support from the Local Authority. The well-focused involvement of advisory staff and consultants has done much to sustain a satisfactory overall rate of progress despite on-going difficulties at the most senior level of school management.

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

Yours sincerely

Glynn Storer  
Additional Inspector