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9 November 2007

Mrs S Foster
The Headteacher
Hillside Primary School
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Dear Mrs Foster

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 1 November 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. The warm welcome that I received was much appreciated. Please pass on my thanks to the chair of governors, the teachers who were observed, and the staff and pupils who took the time to speak to me.

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 21 and 22 March 2007, the school was asked to:

- ensure lesson activities consistently meet the needs of pupils in Years 3 to 6 in order to accelerate progress and raise standards
- monitor pupils' progress regularly so that action can be taken to support pupils who are not doing well enough
- ensure all pupils understand their learning targets so they know what they should do to improve their work
- provide more opportunities for older pupils to apply their skills and solve problems in mathematics.

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' achievement.

At the heart of the good progress being made is your effective leadership, which sets clear direction for the school. An effective senior management team supports you well in a steadfast drive for school improvement. A strong sense of teamwork has been forged amongst all staff, along with a firm commitment to raising pupils'

achievement. The local authority is providing good support for the school and this is having a positive impact in helping the school make good progress in all the issues raised at the last inspection.

Good progress has been made in ensuring lesson activities consistently meet the needs of pupils in Years 3 to 6. Planning has been improved so that activities in lessons now effectively match the range of abilities of pupils in each class. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' performance and use assessment data well to set challenging work. They have a secure understanding of the levels at which their pupils should be working and what is required to improve their performance. The funding of additional teaching assistants has been successful in providing extra support to meet individual needs, particularly for less able pupils. Although the Year 6 test results in 2007 in English, mathematics and science were below average, this was due to a legacy of underachievement of these pupils. The school's data shows these pupils made good progress and achieved well in relation to their prior attainment. The levels of attainment of pupils currently in Year 6 indicate a stronger picture for the end of year tests in 2008. Pupils make good progress and achieve well through Years 3 to 6.

There has been good progress made in monitoring the progress that pupils make, particularly in English and mathematics. Actions taken by the school mean that teachers are now more accountable for the progress their pupils make. They are required to use ongoing assessments to create termly action plans to target any apparent underachievement. This is monitored closely by leadership and management and so any underperformance of individual pupils is identified early and action taken to provide extra support. The school's tracking procedures effectively highlight the progress of different groups of pupils and trends over time. The information gathered is used well to set targets to further improve pupil performance. The school acknowledges this model of monitoring should be extended to other subjects to strengthen provision further.

Good progress has been made in ensuring all pupils understand their learning targets by a whole school approach to target setting having been put into place. As a result, in each class, pupils are set individual targets in English and mathematics and group targets are displayed on learning walls. Discussions with pupils clearly show they are aware of their targets and know what to do to achieve them. Pupils are particularly proud of the achievement board in the hall that enables their successes to be celebrated by their peers. The school recognises that pupils could be more involved in assessing for themselves how well they are doing and in setting their own targets for improvement. Marking is not always used effectively to suggest to pupils what actions they could take to make improvements in their work. Good progress has been made in providing more opportunities for problem solving in mathematics for older pupils. Such opportunities are now highlighted in planning and are an integral part of the curriculum in mathematics. The subject leader monitors provision closely to ensure consistency between classes in helping pupils develop their problem solving skills in an effective manner.

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

Yours sincerely

Melvyn Hemmings
Additional Inspector