

29 November 2007

The Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Hoult

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 28 November, 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 governors and to the Local Authority for contributing to the inspection and, not least, to the pupils, who made me very welcome.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

As a result of the inspection on 24 - 25 April 2007, the school was asked to eliminate underachievement, particularly in English; improve the leadership and management of subjects, so that monitoring is more rigorous; improve the accuracy of assessment and the tracking of pupils' attainment and progress and to use this information to give pupils an understanding of how to improve; and ensure that sufficient time was available for all subjects.

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.

In the most recent national tests for seven and eleven year olds, the school's results were significantly below the national average and standards of writing were exceptionally low. The school has taken action to improve the quality of teaching and learning and has placed a strong emphasis on improving pupils' writing skills. Staff training for new initiatives has been thorough and both staff and pupils have responded positively to the challenge to 'raise their game'. Inspection evidence indicates that teaching and learning are at least satisfactory throughout the school and that there is good teaching in some classes. Where teaching has improved, it is more lively and engaging. Teachers have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve and set work that is challenging, well matched to pupils' abilities and moves pupils on in their learning. Pupils say that they enjoy activities such as 'Big Writing Days', because they are fun and help them to write better. However, there are still inconsistencies; these occur, for example, in the quality of teachers marking and the

help it gives to pupils, in the pace of lessons and the demands made of pupils. In the lessons which have these features, pupils' progress is no better than satisfactory. Whilst there are indications that pupils' progress in some lessons is beginning to improve, improvement is not yet sufficiently rapid or widespread to combat the legacy of underachievement that has built up over recent years. Consequently, many pupils are still working at levels below those normally expected for their age and their achievement over time remains inadequate.

An important factor in recent improvements to the quality of teaching and learning has been a strengthening of monitoring procedures. Senior managers and governors are more actively involved in checking aspects of the school's work. Management roles have been reorganised and subject leaders now have a real role in driving forward improvements, checking outcomes and building consistency. The co-ordinators for literacy and numeracy are enthusiastic about their new roles and committed to the task of raising standards and achievement. School action plans and monitoring timetables indicate that there are satisfactory arrangements for them to do this work. Consequently, the impact of their work is already beginning to show in the classroom, because initiatives such as the use of 'working walls' and 'Kung Fu punctuation', are improving pupils' learning. Satisfactory improvement, therefore, has been made on the leadership and management of subjects through more rigorous monitoring and evaluation. However, these arrangements have not been in place for long enough to allow subject leaders to secure total consistency or to impact fully on pupils' achievements over time.

In order to strengthen assessment procedures, the school has become part of the Intensifying Support Programme (ISP). This has required staff to undertake training and to introduce procedures for the regular assessment and tracking of pupils' progress and for the setting of targets to improve pupils' achievement over time. These procedures are now fully in place and the first round of half-termly assessments show marginal gains. In the best lessons, teachers use pupils' targets to set tasks that are closely matched to their immediate learning needs. They make reference to targets during the lesson and in marking pupils' work and as a result, pupils are well motivated to succeed. Subject leaders are currently working with staff to improve the accuracy of their assessments and to build consistency in the ways in which assessments are used in planning, checking and guiding pupils' learning.

The school has worked hard to improve the curriculum and improvement has been good. The school's curriculum is considerably better than it was at the time of the previous inspection. The school has successfully rebalanced its curriculum so that all subjects are allotted adequate time and the wasting of teaching time has been eliminated. The school has gone further in its review and improvement of the curriculum by increasing opportunities for writing in all subjects, in line with the current drive to raise standards in writing. Furthermore, there is more emphasis on outdoor learning for children in the Foundation Stage and subject leaders are introducing a stronger focus on the improvement of pupils' skills across the whole curriculum.

The school has received good support from the Local Authority. The well focused involvement of advisory staff and consultants has done much to promote a satisfactory overall rate of progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Glynn Storer

Additional Inspector