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Mrs Maria Houston
The Headteacher
Eton Wick CofE First School
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Dear Mrs Houston

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 12 December 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also thank the staff and pupils who met me in addition to your chairman of governors, the local authority (LA) representatives and your school improvement partner. I would particularly like to thank the children for letting me share some of their lovely Christmas play.

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 in May 2007, the school was asked to ensure that:

- lessons are rigorously monitored so that the school always acts effectively to address its weaknesses in teaching and learning
- higher attaining pupils are set challenging work in English and mathematics that enables them to make good progress
- pupils receive regular, clear, helpful feedback on how to improve their work
- procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are established and used consistently to raise standards further.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making inadequate progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement. This is because although there is a commitment to improvement and there has been some progress on a number of fronts the continued lack of consistency and stability in leadership has not enabled the school to move forward as quickly as it needs. In addition although the school now has an action plan in place to drive forward improvement it does not identify clear

quantifiable targets and milestones to be achieved on the way. This means that progress cannot be adequately evaluated in order to enable appropriate revisions to plans to take place and governors and the LA cannot adequately monitor the school's actions.

Since the last inspection the school has seen significant turbulence in staffing and governance. Immediately following the inspection the substantive head went on long-term sick leave. This was covered by an acting headteacher in the summer term followed by an acting shared headship in the autumn term. The substantive head is currently making a phased return to work prior to returning full-time in January. The LA plans to appoint a consultant headteacher to support the substantive head. Since September the school has had two acting deputy headteachers and the current post holder will be leaving at the end of the Christmas term. Currently the school has no replacement for this post. Two NQTs were appointed in September; however, the school currently does not have a replacement for the Year 3 teacher who is leaving at the end of the Christmas term or for part of the Year 4 job-share. A new chairman of governors was appointed in September.

Key Stage 1 results for 2007 show that standards were broadly average at the end of Year 2. The decline in standards seen in the previous two years has been halted. However although girls are achieving similar standards to boys they are doing less well than girls nationally. The school's data for the end of Year 3 and 4 showed that pupils made satisfactory progress last year in reading, writing and mathematics.

Since the last inspection the school has implemented regular monitoring of lessons. This has led to some appropriate staff training particularly in dealing with poor behaviour in the classroom and developing more challenge in numeracy lessons. In addition there has been staff training in order to implement a new reading scheme in Years 1 and 2. Additional training is planned for the New Year including opportunities for staff to work with local leading mathematics teachers. Teachers' weekly planning is reviewed by one of the acting headteachers and useful feedback given. The school's monitoring shows that the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and my observations broadly concur with this. Teachers plan systematically and organise their lessons well. In good lessons teaching is highly structured with a variety of activities to engage pupils at all times and support their learning. However many of the weaknesses in teaching noted at the last inspection remain. Expectations are generally not correctly set and the pace is inappropriate for some of the children. In addition teachers need to take more account of the different needs of the pupils in the classroom in order to tailor support and challenge.

All staff have undertaken training on working with higher attaining pupils. Teachers are in the process of gathering evidence to identify these pupils; however, this is not yet complete. Evidence from my visit including discussions with children, lesson observations and scrutiny of children's work suggests that higher attaining children are still not being consistently challenged.

The school identifies continued inconsistencies in the degree to which pupils receive regular, clear and helpful feedback on how to improve their work. Where marking is good, it is closely linked to the subject targets in pupils' books and clearly indicates the next steps in learning. However, older pupils in particular are not clear about how well they are doing or what they should be aiming to achieve in the short or long term. The school plans to address this issue but the school improvement plan does not specifically identify this.

The school has recently made progress in developing a system to track pupils' achievement. Pupils are now being set challenging targets although the use of this in ensuring that work is accurately tailored to their needs is still inconsistent. The school has plans to monitor pupils' progress carefully to see whether any pupils or classes are making slower progress in order more effectively to provide additional support.

Since the last inspection the school has identified the need to improve the behaviour of a minority of children who are impeding the learning of others in their classes. As a result the school has focused staff training on addressing this issue. During my visit I observed satisfactory levels of focus and concentration in classes although some lack of pace and inappropriate levels of challenge and support resulted in some pupils becoming restless. Pupils' movement about the school is orderly and in their dealings with adults they are thoughtful and courteous.

The LA has provided a range of support for the school including the strengthening of the school leadership team. In particular the recently appointed school improvement partner has been centrally involved in monitoring teaching and learning and the advanced skills governor, appointed by the LA, has ensured that governors are developing a better understanding of their role and are now providing the school with better challenge. However the LA support has been inconsistent with discontinuity in personnel. There have been some breakdowns in communications between the school and the LA which has resulted in ongoing uncertainty regarding aspects of the school leadership. In addition the LA has not ensured that the school's improvement planning is robust and the lack of quantitative success criteria means that it has not been possible for the LA to monitor the progress made by the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Maria Dawes
Her Majesty's Inspector