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22 January 2008

Ms N Brook
The Headteacher
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Dear Ms Brook

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 15 January 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I would be grateful if you would also pass on my thanks to the governors, staff and pupils who met with me during the 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 27 and 28 June 2007, the school was asked to improve standards and the level of achievement in Years 3 to 6, the quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6 by taking more determined steps to remedy weaknesses and writing skills by raising expectations about what should be achieved in lessons.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the school is making satisfactory progress overall. This reflects improving standards and achievement in Years 3 to 6, particularly in literacy and science, and the much improved system of tracking pupil progress now in place. Although the quality of teaching is improving, a stubborn proportion of inadequate teaching remains. The monitoring of teaching is not yet sharp or rigorous enough to make the improvements more secure. During this monitoring visit the majority of inspection evidence was collected from Years 3 to 6 to reflect the areas of improvement outlined above.

Standards and achievement have improved in Key Stage 2 and the school achieved its best ever results in the national tests in 2007 for pupils at age 11. Standards are now in line with national averages and between 80% and 85% of all pupils reached the required levels in 2007, with around a quarter reaching the higher levels. There remains some variation between subjects however and the school was disappointed by its results in mathematics. These showed Year 6 pupils making unsatisfactory

progress by the time they left the school at the end of the summer term 2007. Standards of reading are good throughout the school. The performance of boys is slightly below that of girls, but the gap is closing.

There remains some variation between year groups and subjects, with pupils making better progress in Year 6 than in some other classes within Key Stage 2. The school has identified the progress being made by some pupils in Year 4 and Year 5 as a cause for concern. However, standards and achievement are now much more accurately monitored and additional resources and support are allocated efficiently where required. The good work of support staff in classes is helping to improve the progress of those pupils who are at risk of underachievement.

The quality of teaching is improving and is satisfactory overall, although some inadequate teaching remains. The improvement is largely as a result of effective use of lesson timings and the sharing of lesson objectives clearly with pupils. This has helped increase the pace of learning and, as a consequence, pupils enjoy their lessons and are keen to learn. They are increasingly able to assess their own work and, in some classes, are able to describe in detail what they are doing, why, and at what level they are working.

Relationships throughout the school are positive and constructive and behaviour is good. The quality of teachers' marking is especially good in many classes and this helps pupils by providing clear advice and setting high expectations. In one good lesson observed in Year 6, for example, pupils were encouraged to develop their writing in a session characterised by brisk pace and good teacher knowledge which ensured good progress.

Where teaching is less effective, however, it lacks sparkle and fails to engage the interest of pupils. For example, interactive whiteboards are used infrequently and, in some classes, there is too much reliance on undemanding worksheets rather than on more engaging resources. Long and teacher dominated introductory sessions in some classes prevent pupils from speaking or writing in detail. In these sessions the pace of learning remains slow.

The school has rightly identified, as a priority, increasing the proportion of teaching that is good or better to help secure the improvement in pupil progress. Although the school's leadership has taken steps to improve the quality of teaching by providing additional support and examples of good practice, monitoring of teaching lacks sharp judgement and rigour. This has kept the pace of improvement slow and allowed inadequate teaching, albeit less frequent, to linger. There is an urgent need to establish a fresh sense of rigour in the new leadership team.

Standards of writing have improved and are now average in Key Stage 2 but not for pupils age 7 where they are below average. Handwriting is generally good and pupils pay careful attention to the presentation of their work. Older pupils use an increasing range of spelling strategies alongside a rich vocabulary. Pupils themselves say that they are asked to use a wider range of skills in their writing and show a good understanding of sentence construction and how to write for a variety of purposes.

For example, in Year 6, pupils are able to describe how to use connectives to extend text in persuasive writing.

The extent and quality of external support from Education Walsall is satisfactory.

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

Yours sincerely

Ceri Morgan
Her Majesty's Inspector