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10 March 2008

Mrs S Bentley
The Headteacher
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Wensley Green
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Dear Mrs Bentley

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 27 February 2008, 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 the teachers observed and the staff who met with 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 14 and 15 June 2007 the school was asked to:

- improve achievement and standards in English, mathematics and science, particularly in Years 3 to 6
- improve the overall quality of teaching by raising teachers' expectations, ensuring that lesson activities are closely matched to the needs of pupils and deliver effectively what is planned
- improve the quality of provision in the Foundation Stage.

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' achievement.

There have been several staff changes since the previous inspection. Five teachers have left the school and new appointments made to strengthen the team of teachers. One of these appointments, an assistant headteacher, is now responsible for the leadership and management of the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

The legacy of inadequate provision continues to show in the standards reached by the pupils and the progress they are making. Standards remain exceptionally low and achievement is inadequate. The school's own data shows that reading and writing are particularly weak in Year 2 and that attainment in mathematics is well below average in Year 6. However, the school's rigorous internal tracking systems indicate that progress is beginning to accelerate and standards are starting to improve in all of the core subjects. In Key Stages 1 and 2 an increased proportion of pupils are

now working at the levels expected for their ages. Progress remains slowest in Years 3 and 4, but here too there is evidence that the gap between the standards achieved by pupils in the school and pupils nationally is closing. Pupils' writing shows that punctuation and spelling skills are weak. However, there are promising signs of improving confidence and understanding in the way pupils, from the Foundation Stage upwards, approach written tasks.

The school's own monitoring of teaching indicates that the quality of all teaching is now at least satisfactory. During the monitoring visit, a very small proportion of the teaching observed was inadequate but this is much smaller than the high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching reported in the previous inspection. The school has focused successfully on improving aspects of weak teaching. Pupils settle well to their work and, in the great majority of lessons, teachers plan activities that match pupils needs. The consistent implementation of a new marking policy demonstrates teachers' increased expectations. In Year 6, for example, pupils receive detailed and helpful comments about their work and there is a high degree of clarity about the criteria for success. Work in books shows that provision for the higher and middle ability pupils is now sound. However, there is still insufficient good teaching. For example, learning slows when teacher introductions are too long and pupils sit passively listening rather than applying the knowledge or skills they have been taught. Similarly, a minority of teachers struggle to clarify understanding when attempting to deal with pupils' misconceptions.

There have been satisfactory improvements in the Foundation Stage provision. The recently appointed assistant headteacher has acted quickly to ensure that the curriculum supports all areas of learning and she monitors the implementation of new policies through planning conferences, formal observations and the review of data. As a result, there is a greater consistency and quality in teaching and learning in the Nursery and Reception classes. Well focused planning now considers all of the different learning contexts carefully to provide a richer range of experiences. The improved learning environment contributes to satisfactory progress in all areas of learning both inside and outside the classroom. The high priority given to quality daily phonic sessions is a strength and is accelerating the reading and writing skills of the children. There are improved systems for assessing progress but these are still at an early stage of development.

The local authority has appropriately amended its statement of action and provides satisfactory support. The school speaks positively of the encouragement and training it has received from the great majority of local authority advisers and consultants. The improved quality of teaching demonstrates the impact of this support.

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

Yours sincerely

Anthony O'Malley
Her Majesty's Inspector