

11 June 2008

Miss J Trickett
The Headteacher
Hoo St Werburgh Primary School and Marlborough Centre
Pottery Road
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Dear Miss Trickett

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 5 June 2008, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions, and for the comprehensive information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the staff, pupils, chair of governors and the local authority representative who found time to talk to me during my 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 13 and 14 November 2007, the school was asked to:

- focus on improving pupils' writing skills, spelling and use of vocabulary, and their understanding and use of number
- ensure teaching is consistently good by using assessment information consistently well to make sure work always matches the needs of all pupils and ensure pupils understand how to improve further
- develop the skills of all middle managers in monitoring and evaluating, to drive forward the improvement in standards.

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 improvements in the standards that pupils reach in English and mathematics and a higher proportion of pupils are now working at the levels expected for their ages. However, progress across and within year groups has been inconsistent and the overall rate of progress has not been high enough to address the legacy of previous pupil underachievement.

Pupils' writing has improved and there has been a strong focus on encouraging pupils to make adventurous choices of vocabulary to improve their writing. For example, pupils in Year 2 were able to devise interesting and accurate sentences using the past and present tense. Although there has been general improvement in writing, some pupils would benefit from more opportunities to develop their writing through extended writing tasks. An increasing number of pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of number and use and apply mathematics confidently to solve problems. This was demonstrated by Year 5 pupils who used their calculation skills to quickly work out simple percentages of everyday quantities.

Staff changes have provided opportunities to make key appointments to strengthen the school's capacity to improve and good professional development opportunities have enabled staff to have a better understanding of pupil progress issues. The school now has good systems for pupil assessment and has established a reliable baseline from which future progress can be measured. Regular reviews of pupils' targets and their progress towards them ensure that staff are well informed and appropriate intervention programmes are used to help pupils who are at risk of falling further behind. Teachers are now starting to make more effective use of assessment data to plan pupils' next steps for learning, but this is not yet fully embedded across the school. In many lessons the teachers provide tasks that are well matched to the needs of different groups of pupils, including extension tasks to challenge the most able. Pupils are generally clear about what their targets are but they do not always feel well informed about what precisely they need to do to achieve them. In some classes, pupils are given clear success criteria and encouraged to evaluate their own learning. There are also some examples of good marking and oral feedback which provide pupils with clear guidance on how to improve or develop their work, but this is not always closely linked to the learning objective for the task.

Middle leaders are determined and sharply focused on monitoring and evaluating the impact of the actions taken to bring about improvement. They are clear about the strengths and areas for development in the areas that they are responsible for.

The local authority has provided an appropriate balance of challenge and support through the intensifying support programme. A series of well planned timely actions, combined with rigorous monitoring, has led to regular support and advice which is helping to develop capacity within the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis
Her Majesty's Inspector