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2 July 2008

Mrs Fiona Allen  
The Headteacher  
Corsham Primary School  
Pound Pill  
Corsham  
Wiltshire  
SN13 9YW

Dear Mrs Allen

Collaborative Restart: Monitoring Inspection of Corsham Primary School

### Introduction

Following my visit with Peter Kemble and David Shears, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 25 and 26 June 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school opened in September 2007.

This letter will be published on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' work, and met with the executive headteacher, associate headteachers, subject coordinators, groups of pupils, the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority.

### Context

The school is based at two sites, Broadwood and Pound Pill, which are at opposite ends of Corsham. There are 542 pupils on roll, with 124 at the Broadwood site and 418 at Pound Pill. The school has a speech and language unit for 18 pupils, which is based at Pound Pill. There have been no significant changes to the school's context since the school's first monitoring inspection in April.

## Achievement and standards

Children in the Foundation Stage have made good progress this year at both sites. Through sharing the good practice from Pound Pill across the school, and appointing experienced staff, the school has focused on key aspects of children's development, particularly literacy, numeracy and personal development. At Broadwood, children's work books and records show that, although most will not meet the expected early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1, they have made especially good progress during the spring and summer terms. At Pound Pill, more children are on track to achieve the early learning goals and their standards are broadly average. The school has made less progress in improving provision for outside play area at Broadwood, which was a weakness in the predecessor school; although plans are now in place to cover and resource the outside area.

The school's assessments show standards are broadly average at Year 2 and Year 6. Within this overall picture, there are stronger and weaker aspects and some differences between the two sites. In Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are below average at Broadwood, whereas they are broadly average at Pound Pill. In contrast, in Year 6, standards in mathematics and science are better at Broadwood than Pound Pill.

Across the whole school, standards are strongest in mathematics with around half of pupils in Year 6 predicted to reach the higher Level 5. This monitoring visit focused on mathematics in some depth because pupils who were in Year 6 last year, at Pound Pill, made slower progress in mathematics between Years 3 and 6 than they did in English and science. The Year 6 pupils who are currently at Pound Pill have made better progress during these years. The school's assessments show the large majority have made at least satisfactory progress, although some lower attaining pupils have made slower progress.

Pupils at Broadwood are beginning to catch up and fill the gaps in their learning that occurred whilst they were in the predecessor school. Since the last monitoring visit, more pupils have made at least satisfactory progress and the school is steadily combating the legacy of underachievement for pupils at Broadwood. Some patches of slower progress remain however, and the good provision needs more time to embed before the pupils' achievement is consistent in reading, writing and mathematics.

Since the last visit, the school has developed the way it tracks pupils' progress on both sites. Information from teachers' marking and assessments and pupils' own assessments of their own learning are used effectively to check whether pupils are making sufficient headway in their learning.

## Personal development and well-being

The personal development of pupils continues to be a strength of the school. Pupils are happy at school and feel safe. Those at Broadwood are growing in confidence, both personally and as learners. At both sites, pupils are treated with respect by staff and this good modelling encourages pupils to behave well both towards adults and their peers. When difficulties arise there are good and well understood procedures to help them resolve these at the earliest opportunity. Older pupils support younger ones, but adults are always nearby should they need extra help and advice. Pupils continue to be encouraged to keep safe and healthy. Attendance is satisfactory.

Pupils' attitudes towards school have remained positive since the last monitoring inspection. Pupils like the fact they are rewarded for good work and they really enjoy the commendation assemblies. Pupils have targets to help them to improve and they readily evaluate their own progress in lessons as a matter of routine. Pupils' books show examples where they have not quite understood something in one lesson, indicating this to the teacher and subsequent work has been planned to help them understand. Where this practice is well established, the pupils are clearly developing their independence and influencing their own learning.

Pupils make a sound contribution to the school community, such as raising money for playground markings. They also support others further afield through raising funds for charities for example and supporting a child in India. As their progress improves, particularly at Broadwood, pupils are being better prepared for their next stage of education and their future lives.

## Quality of provision

The good quality of teaching and learning at both sites reported at the time of the last monitoring inspection has been successfully maintained. At Broadwood, teachers have worked very hard to develop pupils' self-confidence and skills of independent learning across all year groups. For example, an effective focus on writing is helping many pupils to write confidently at greater length and with more creativity. Pupils at both sites enjoy most lessons and report that teachers help them when they get stuck. Good use is made of specific targets to help pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve. Discussions with pupils show that they are well aware of their targets, although more so in writing than in mathematics in some cases, and they refer to these in lessons.

Teachers often use open ended questions, for instance in science and mathematics, to help pupils think methodically and to appreciate that responses do not always have to be right or wrong. For example, in a Year 5 and 6 mathematics lesson, pupils were encouraged to explain the way they had solved a problem and this generated interest in the different approaches used to achieve the answer. Many teachers also use questions skilfully to check pupils' understanding. A school focus on problem solving is developing thinking skills amongst pupils. Year 2 pupils were working hard

to find out how many different numbers they could find using only two digits and plus and minus. Some of the higher attaining pupils showed a good awareness of negative numbers in their solutions and all pupils tried very hard to meet the challenge set. Where learning is satisfactory rather than good, the planned tasks are not always sufficiently well matched to learners' needs and abilities. Pupils' pace of learning slows down as a result.

The school has continued to develop and adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of the pupils at Broadwood, which was a weakness in the predecessor school. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved significantly since the last visit and pupils' skills are showing a marked improvement at both sites. Teachers are making greater use of computers in classrooms, and in the three computer suites, to support learning in literacy, numeracy and humanities in particular. The PDA (personal digital assistant) project at Pound Pill, for pupils in Years 4 and 5, is proving very successful and popular and is to be extended to pupils at Broadwood.

Pupils continue to receive good care at both sites. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported. They are identified at an early stage and given appropriate support. The school's provision for these pupils is managed well and teaching assistants receive regular training. Pupils at Broadwood receive much better guidance to support their academic progress than they did in their predecessor school. Marking is generally used effectively to indicate to pupils what they have done well in addition to providing guidance on how they can improve further. Senior leaders have refined and improved the systems for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress since the last monitoring visit. Teachers are highly aware of how much progress their pupils have made term by term and a close eye is kept on those who have made slow or little progress. This is leading to improved achievement across the school.

### Leadership and management

The senior leadership team has ensured the momentum in establishing the new Corsham Primary School has continued since the monitoring visit. The increase in the number of children due to start Reception at Broadwood in September reflects parents' confidence in the school. Senior leaders provide very strong leadership, underpinned by a clear vision as to how they envisage the school developing and improving. This is not a school where things stand still and there is no sense of complacency in terms of the work still to do. The collaborative re-start led to a change of team at both sites. Senior leaders have worked hard to build a strong team spirit, whilst establishing Corsham Primary School as one school. They have wisely built in opportunities for staff to work across both sites, including middle leaders, and have also taken steps to overcome the inevitable feeling of separation, given the distance between the two sites, through frequent use of video conferencing facilities.

Senior leaders have made the most of the opportunities that arose from the collaborative restart to establish additional leadership posts. Middle leaders are developing their roles well, but some are still in the early stages, and it is too soon to see the impact upon pupils' achievement. A good start has been made, for example in the recent detailed scrutiny of pupils' work carried out by subject coordinators. Nevertheless, there is a need for a more diagnostic and analytical approach in order to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses and to evaluate the success of initiatives and interventions. Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching regularly and their written observations are detailed and evaluative. They have an accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, the school's self-evaluation document has not yet been updated to reflect the improvements that have occurred this year, particularly at the Broadwood site.

Senior leaders have improved the way the school uses information from tests and teachers' assessments since the last monitoring inspection. As this first year comes to an end, the school is in a better position to gauge the progress that each pupil has made over the year, taking as a starting point the assessments that were carried out soon after the school opened.

Since the last monitoring visit, governors have set up appropriate systems and procedures for being informed about the progress that pupils make at both sites.

The strengths in leadership show the school has good capacity to improve further.

### Judgement

- Use information from assessments and monitoring to evaluate the success and impact of the school's provision on achievement in reading, writing and mathematics at Broadwood – good.

### External support

The school has continued to receive good support from the senior school improvement advisor and the school improvement professional. Training has been well judged and pertinent, particularly the sessions which have supported middle leaders on evaluating the effectiveness of their respective subjects. The local authority has also supported senior leaders in making accurate judgements of the quality of teaching. The local authority's support has helped to build capacity of senior and middle leaders in improving the school.

### Main Judgements

The school's overall progress – good.

### Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to monitor and support the pupils who have not made the expected progress this year and enable them to learn at an accelerated rate.
- Ensure that the school's self-evaluation document evaluates provision and outcomes at both sites, particularly the extent to which pupils have made progress.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State at the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the chair of governors and the Director of the Department for Children and Education for Wiltshire.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Dickinson  
H M Inspector of Schools