

11 December 2008

Mr M Forber
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Forber

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 10 December 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also extend my thanks to the senior leadership team, subject leaders and pupils for their helpful contributions to the inspection.

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 6 and 7 May 2008 the school was asked to:

- substantially improve teaching so that all pupils learn rapidly
- improve pupils' achievement in mathematics in Key Stage 2
- ensure that pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve
- ensure that subject leaders play a full part in improving their subjects.

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.

Since the last inspection the school has appointed two newly qualified teachers and an experienced teacher who has also taken up the role of special educational needs coordinator. The senior leadership team has been temporarily restructured to utilise the expertise of existing staff with the appointment of an acting assistant headteacher with Key Stage 1 experience and the inclusion of the Key Stage 2 team leader. The senior leadership team has worked closely with local authority advisers to formulate an effective action plan to tackle weaknesses. The plan is well supported by all staff who show a firm commitment to improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising pupils' achievement.

The unvalidated results of the 2008 national tests show that attainment has improved in mathematics at Key Stage 2 and is in line with the 2007 national average. Pupils who left the school in 2008 made good progress from their much lower than average attainment in mathematics at Key Stage 1. Standards attained in both English and science at Key Stage 2, however, were lower in 2008 than they were in 2007. Nevertheless, English targets based on pupils' prior attainment were exceeded, indicating that pupils made satisfactory progress. Performance at Key Stage 1 was weaker in 2008 than in 2007 in both writing and mathematics. Unvalidated data indicate a fall in the percentage of pupils reaching higher levels in writing and a decline in mathematics attainment at all levels. This is a concern shared by the school: staff have undertaken an analysis of results and put support in place for these pupils in Year 3.

The school's tracking of pupils' progress shows that the current Year 6 class are on track to achieve challenging targets at Levels 4 and 5 in English, mathematics and science. The targets are higher than the standards attained in 2008. The improved pupil progress tracking system is enabling the school to identify pupils who are falling behind or who are underachieving and to put appropriate support in place. Tracking indicates that pupils are currently making more consistent progress across the school in the core subjects. This is due to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and a more effective approach to assessment.

Lesson sampling during this inspection corroborated local authority evaluations and the school's own monitoring, which indicate that the proportion of good teaching is increasing. No inadequate teaching was observed and this is a significant improvement since the last inspection when teaching was judged inadequate overall. All staff have been involved in formulating the good teaching policy and have engaged in professional development to shape and share good practice. Lesson observations by the senior leaders and subject leaders have provided helpful feedback for individual teachers and have informed whole school planning to improve teaching and raise achievement. The most effective teaching has clearly defined learning objectives and provides opportunities for pupils to carry out investigations and apply their new learning to a range of tasks. It meets individual learning needs well: challenging the thinking of the most able pupils and providing support for those who need it. The school recognises that there is scope to improve teaching further so that it is consistently good. It is well placed to bring about these improvements using the talents and expertise of staff in the school.

The improved quality of teaching is underpinned by the good procedures put in place to ensure that pupils are aware of their learning targets. Discussion with pupils and observations during the inspection established that they have a good understanding of how well they are doing and they know how to improve the quality of their work. Marking and feedback in books and through the 'post-it' system adopted in Key Stage 2 is informative and helpful.

Pupils are highly appreciative of the guidance and support they receive and enjoy their lessons. Typical comments from pupils were, 'Teachers make learning fun.' and 'They help you learn more, help you when you're stuck and make sure you know what to do.' Pupils are equally positive about the care they receive and they feel safe in school. Their behaviour is good and their enjoyment is evident in their above average levels of attendance and enthusiastic participation in after-school activities.

School leaders and governors are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses in provision. They have put good systems in place to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of provision although these need time to embed in order to impact on standards and achievement across the whole school. The headteacher is driving improvements forward with the full support of staff. He has created very good relationships with parents and is keeping them fully informed of developments in the school and about the progress their children are making.

New structures have empowered subject leaders to audit and evaluate fully their subject through analysis of test results and pupils' progress, scrutiny of planning and pupils' work, and observation of lessons. They have a good overview of strengths and weaknesses which they are using to inform action planning and support individual members of staff. A particularly successful strategy is the paired leadership of subjects which maximises teachers' skills and expertise: they have a collegiate approach to agreeing priorities and driving improvements at whole school level.

The school is aware that it needs to secure good progress by pupils in all subjects and key stages. The structures and systems that have been developed, together with effective use of the expertise of staff, provide a strong foundation for further improvement. The local authority has provided good support to the school to build capacity through action planning and the provision of professional development for staff and governors.

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

Yours sincerely

Jean Kendall
Her Majesty's Inspector