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17 October 2008

Mrs Dorte Neess-Cardie
The Headteacher
Danetree Junior School
Danetree Road
West Ewell
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Dear Mrs Neess-Cardie

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 October 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please convey my thanks to the staff, chair of governors and pupils who talked to me about the school's work.

The headteacher who has been in post for one academic year has reviewed and restructured the workforce. Three senior teachers have been appointed to strengthen the senior management team, which includes an assistant headteacher with responsibility for literacy and two senior teachers with an overview of school improvement work and science in their respective posts. The newly qualified teacher previously on maternity leave resumed her post at the start of September 2008. The new staffing structure now includes the expanded headship team, a leader of learning and heads of year. Additionally, the term teaching assistants has been changed to learning assistants in order to place more emphasis on the learning process. Each year group now has an assigned higher level learning assistant.

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 9 January 2008, the school was asked to: enable pupils to make faster progress in mathematics and science, especially the most able learners; raise the quality of teaching and learning to at least good to help pupils improve their learning and develop assessment further so that it is used more widely to inform teaching about pupils' progress and provide challenging learning activities.

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's assessment data and the 2008 unvalidated test results indicate that achievement and standards have improved and are better than the previous year's notably in English and science and at the higher levels in each respective subject including mathematics. The school exceeded the set targets at Level 4 and above in English and science but not in mathematics. Results have been analysed carefully and the school recognises that there are weaknesses in reading and number work particularly in the work of pupils with learning difficulties who are not making as much progress as their peers. There is now increased focus on reading through reviewing approaches to guided reading and researching good practice to guide the planned methodology teachers will eventually use. This is however at the early stage of development. Much work has been undertaken to improve results in science, where pupils achieved the best results. In science, there is more emphasis on investigative work, which pupils say helps them to learn well. Appropriate steps have been taken to highlight number work in mathematics and target pupils who do not have a sound grasp of basic calculations. Additionally, there is increased specialist provision in science and mathematics for gifted and talented pupils.

The school recognises that there is still more work to do to ensure that all pupils make good or better progress in line with their starting points. Consequently, there is an increasing bank of data charting pupils' progress. There is a sharp focus on analysing pupils' performance in relation to gender and the school has yet to begin exploring the data to identify the outcomes for the diverse groups of pupils.

Rapid progress has been made in introducing new systems to track pupils' progress. The systems are being embedded and are beginning to make a significant difference to the school's improvement. Testing in English, mathematics and science is now a regular feature of school improvement; the transition process between infant schools and Danetree is making better use of assessment data in relation to benchmarking pupils' progress; there are regular meetings to discuss pupils' progress and the information is being used by the headship team to hold teachers more accountable for the performance of their classes. The assessment information is contributing to teachers matching work to pupils' individual needs. Pupils indicated that they like the 'comments on their work and being tested each term as this helps them to know how well they are doing'.

Much has been done to improve the quality of teaching. A rigorous review of teaching and learning has led to senior staff and all teachers developing clear expectations of what constitutes good features in any lesson. The shared vision and developmental work is helping teachers to use the new planning formats to plan better and more interesting lessons. Although pupils feel that lessons are more challenging, practical and fun, they would like to be given 'harder work in every lesson and more research for homework'. Additional developments include a sharper focus on basic skills and them across the curriculum. There is now an extensive and rigorous programme of lesson monitoring and a significant number of observations have been carried out. This has enabled the headship team to take robust action

where teaching has been inadequate. This has included team teaching and working alongside consultants. Learning assistants are also now used purposefully in lessons. The new approaches to teaching are working well. They are supporting improvement in learning particularly when lessons are evaluated and misconceptions recognised and are subsequently revisited to consolidate skills as demonstrated in a number of lessons observed during the monitoring visit.

The local authority's statement of action is unsatisfactory and as yet, the weaknesses in the plan to support the school have not been rectified. The authority's support for the school has been unsatisfactory. The school's progress has been compromised partly as support has been inconsistent and planning has not reflected its immediate priorities. For example, despite the support from consultants and an advanced skills governor being assigned to the governing body, there has been insufficient guidance about the next steps needed and planning does not dovetail well with the school's priorities. Additionally, there have been two school improvement partners in less than ten months. Currently, there is a move to ensure that all future planning takes into consideration the needs of the school. Governors are now more aware of their roles and have begun to hold the school to account.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. Rodney". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Carmen Rodney
Her Majesty's Inspector