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Protect inspection



20 November 2008

Mrs L Corbett
The Headteacher
Halsford Park Primary School
Manor Road
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Dear Mrs Corbett

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 20 November 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you and your staff provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, particularly those in Year 6, and members of staff who gave me their time and helpful information.

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 February 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards by using assessment data more effectively
- improve the quality of teaching by making lessons more challenging
- sharpen the roles of middle leaders to ensure good teaching and learning.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress overall in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Over the last eight months the systems and processes for developing and using assessment information have been considerably strengthened. There is now a good range of useful information that is being used by teachers to target individual pupils who were previously underachieving. The extremely comprehensive planning for lessons has been used well to identify the levels that these pupils are working at and appropriate support and challenge are being given to fill in the gaps in their learning. In addition, pupils are extending their understanding and are beginning to use these

skills in a variety of situations. The initial impact of this improved provision can be seen in some areas of the 2008 national test results. For example, the proportion of pupils then in Year 6 who achieved the age expected Level 4 in mathematics has improved by 12%, whilst in science the proportion achieving the higher Level 5 rose by 19%. This represents good achievement for a year group who were only achieving at broadly average levels when they were in Year 2. Achievement in writing still remains a relative weakness, particularly for the more able. The school has embarked on an intensive programme to raise achievement in this area and work in pupils' books shows that the range of different styles has improved writing overall during this term. In discussion, a number of older pupils spoke enthusiastically and proudly about how their writing has improved through the use of a nationally recognised programme. Several said this was their 'favourite thing at school'. Internal assessments, conducted termly, also support this improved progress and it is clear that more pupils have made at least the expected levels of progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science over the last two terms.

Teaching has improved because of the better focused planning, sharper use of assessment information, and more innovative and exciting lessons. The school's own and external monitoring indicate that the proportion of good teaching has increased, ensuring progress is more even as pupils move through the school. This is supported by the school's analysis from regular testing. Records show that, while there is still some underachievement, the proportion has been reduced significantly. Again, discussions with pupils clearly show they understand what they are learning and what they need to do to get to the next level. This is further enhanced by displays in the classroom which outline the progression, by target sheets in books and by the comprehensive assessment records about each individual. The increased confidence of teachers has allowed the school to redevelop the outline plans for the curriculum. This is aimed at balancing any subject-specific skills with pupils' broader appreciation of how different subjects link together.

Satisfactory progress has been made in developing the role of the middle managers. While some members are relatively new to the school and others still have to ensure that their subjects are fully effective, they now have a much clearer idea about how to bring about improvement. This has come through regular monitoring of teaching and learning and has highlighted where new ideas have been successful and what needs further work. For example, one manager has been instrumental in developing the creative curriculum, designed to promote better basic skills, and has provided an atmosphere in which all staff feel they can contribute. Joint lesson observations have enhanced teachers' skills and confidence in evaluating teaching and learning. As a result, their judgements are more robust.

The local authority has provided a statement of action which is fit for purpose. It lays out an effective agenda for change within a realistic but challenging timescale. This, along with consultant support, has helped drive improvement and steer the school towards eliminating its weaknesses.

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

Yours sincerely

David Collard
Additional Inspector