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12 November 2008

Mrs Jill Evans
The Headteacher
St Swithun's CofE Primary School
Grundy Crescent
Kennington
Oxford
OX1 5PS

Dear Mrs Evans

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 November 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.

Since the previous inspection, there have been changes in staff. The Key Stage 2 leader has been appointed to the role of acting deputy headteacher due to a maternity leave. Two newly qualified teachers were appointed in September 2008 and there are also four temporary part-time teachers covering maternity leave.

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 5 February 2008, the school was asked to: raise standards in writing by accelerating the progress and achievement of boys and more able pupils; improve the quality of teaching so that all boys and more able pupils are consistently challenged; ensure the monitoring and evaluation carried out by the leadership team is sharply focussed on underachieving groups and improve the conditions for learning so that they reflect high expectations, stimulate interest and celebrate success.

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.

The school's 2008 unvalidated test results indicate that achievement and standards have improved. Results are better than in the previous year, notably in English and

mathematics, and at the higher levels in science. In particular, standards in writing improved significantly and more pupils attained at the higher levels. Nonetheless, the school recognises that it still has more work to do to ensure that the number of more able pupils achieving at the higher levels in writing continues to increase. This remains a key priority for improvement. The school's own data on pupils' progress in the past year is also encouraging and shows that both boys and more able pupils are now making better progress in writing.

The school has made good progress in developing a rigorous tracking system to monitor the pupils' achievement and there is an increasing bank of data charting their progress. There is now a sharp focus on analysing pupils' performance in relation to gender on a regular basis by senior leaders, and the targets set for pupils are challenging. Good strategies are in place to develop a consistent approach across the school to improve writing. Both staff and pupils reported that these initiatives are having a positive effect on motivating pupils to enjoy writing, particularly boys. Work in the pupils' books in Year 2 and Year 6 coupled with lesson observations in Literacy showed pleasing evidence of the positive impact of these strategies.

My brief visits to a sample of lessons confirmed the accuracy of the senior leaders' view of the improved quality of teaching. All teaching observed was at least satisfactory and some was good. A positive working atmosphere was underpinned by good relationships and behaviour. Detailed lesson planning demonstrates that teachers are aware of pupils' general levels of ability, and includes information on how boys and the more able pupils are to be challenged. A group of able Year 6 pupils talked knowledgeably about their personal targets. They reported that learning was now far more challenging, which they enjoyed. Marking of writing in Year 2 and Year 6 included good comments on how pupils could improve. The school has done much to improve the quality of the learning environment and classrooms are generally well organised. That said, not enough has been done to ensure resources are of a high quality, and that displays reflect consistently high standards.

The senior leadership team and the newly appointed chair of the governing body know what is required to accelerate progress and appropriate actions are in place to bring about the required improvement. They have risen to the challenges well and are tackling underachievement in a determined way. Staff, too, are working hard to bring about improvement and there is an enthusiastic team spirit in the school. Monitoring and evaluation by senior leaders are systematic and focussed. However, these processes do not yet ensure that leaders at all levels in the school are involved. The programme for this work is not documented clearly enough in the school improvement plan.

The local authority's statement of action meets requirements and contains appropriate strategies for supporting the school to improve. The Task Group is working effectively to review the action taken and the progress the school is making.

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 "Mary Harlow". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Her Majesty's Inspector