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Ms J Riley
Acting Headteacher
St John CofE Primary School
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Dear Ms Riley

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 March 2009, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the vice-chair of governors, staff and pupils with whom I spoke.

At the time of this monitoring visit the headteacher was absent on maternity leave. A temporary assistant headteacher was also absent owing to an extended period of ill health. The deputy headteacher has taken on the role of acting headteacher and is being supported by a part-time consultant headteacher. A temporary assistant headteacher is also in post.

As a result of the inspection on 17 and 18 June 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards and achievement in Key Stage 2 and standards in writing at Key Stage 1
- improve teaching across the school so that it is sufficiently challenging and engaging to secure consistently good or better learning
- improve the facilities for learning outdoors in the Foundation Stage
- develop the contribution of leaders at all levels to raising standards and improving achievement.

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 local authority has produced an effective action plan in collaboration with the school. The school has made good use of the high quality support provided by the local authority as outlined in the action plan. In particular, the appointment of an experienced consultant headteacher has been very effective in supporting the acting headteacher to continue the

drive for improvement and build on the strengths identified at the last inspection. The expertise of an outside literacy consultant has helped raise standards of writing across the school and especially in Key Stage 1 where standards have improved significantly. They are now comparable to those in reading and mathematics. This is being followed by a similarly intensive input from a numeracy consultant across the school. A robust programme of in-service training for teachers and teaching assistants is also making clear what constitutes good teaching and effective classroom support.

Achievement is improving in the Early Years Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1. Teaching has improved and is more consistent across subjects and classes. Teachers challenge pupils more in lessons through more engaging and stimulating activities. Nevertheless, pupils have not yet fully made up for the gaps in their prior learning. Improvements have been made to the outdoor area in the Early Years Foundation Stage. New direct access is now in place and a covered area allows outdoor provision in all weathers. This is enabling children to make better progress and has increased their enjoyment of learning.

Standards and achievement are starting to rise at Key Stage 2. The present Year 6 cohort contains a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, so standards are lower than in previous years. Nonetheless, underachievement has been reduced and most pupils are now doing much better. Much of the improvement is down to the strong teaching in Year 6 and the introduction of intensive booster classes for targeted groups of pupils. This helps to make up for the legacy of inconsistent progress and achievement made by pupils in some Key Stage 2 classes. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning and the use of robust systems to track pupils' progress mean the school can now confidently pinpoint the reasons for any inconsistent progress in these classes. It is setting about tackling them with the necessary determination to bring about the improvement in the quality of teaching and its consistent impact on learning.

Despite the absence of the headteacher, the acting headteacher, ably supported by other leaders and managers, is driving the school forward. Effective teamwork is evident in the pursuit of raising standards and improving pupils' achievement. Middle managers are enthusiastic about their roles. They appreciate the newly introduced closer definition of their responsibilities. Rigorous monitoring now underpins the work of all leaders and managers. As a result, the school has a more accurate picture of its own effectiveness. Leaders and managers have a better understanding of what the school does well and how to bring about improvement to weaker areas of its work. The governing body is receiving more detailed information about the performance of the school. It is using this to ask pertinent questions and to hold the school more to account to make sure it continues to improve and meet the targets set out in the school development plan.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Wall
Additional Inspector