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Mrs Gina Harris
The Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Harris

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 30 April 2009, 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 and pupils who met with me as well as to the vice-chair of governors.

Since the school was last inspected, there have been some changes in staffing which have affected subject and senior leadership as well as teaching. The deputy headteacher took on leadership of literacy following the inspection in September 2008. When she went on maternity leave at Christmas, this responsibility passed temporarily to the Early Years Foundation Stage leader who also became the acting deputy. A new teacher has joined the school to teach the Year 6 class until the deputy headteacher returns. The Year 5 teacher resigned from her post very recently and has been replaced by a teacher on a temporary contract for the current term.

As a result of the inspection on 16 and 17 September 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards and improve pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics, in Years 3 to 6, by the use of more precise monitoring and evaluation, to identify where teaching and learning needs to be improved
- improve the consistency of marking and the use of assessment to show pupils how to improve their work
- ensure that the strengths in leadership evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 are developed throughout the school.

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.

A good range of approaches to monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning have been employed by the school with close support from the local authority staff and from an experienced consultant headteacher. Strengths and areas for development in teaching have been identified and there is now a sharp focus on addressing weaknesses, particularly through the provision of a wide range of often individualised support. The school's data from lesson observations and inspection evidence indicate that teaching in Key Stage 2 is improving. However, leaders and managers recognise that there is more to do to achieve their target of a higher proportion of teaching being consistently good or better.

The progress pupils make in Key Stage 2 is improving, although there is still more ground to be made up, particularly for pupils in Years 5 and 6 where there have been staffing changes and gaps in previous learning have restricted achievement, especially in mathematics. Targets for Year 6 for the summer 2009 are challenging. The school's data and evidence from work scrutiny and discussions with pupils indicate that they are on track to meet targets in writing. Pupils now develop their ideas more extensively. As one put it, 'I used to write half a page and now I've gone up to about a page and a quarter.' Handwriting has also improved. Another pupil reported 'now my writing's really neat'. In mathematics, although pupils recognise that they are being supported in grasping concepts over which they have struggled in the past, the school's data show that targets are unlikely to be met. However, current assessment information indicates that standards overall at the end of Key Stage 2 are likely to represent an improvement on those achieved by Year 6 in 2008.

The school established a new marking and assessment policy in November 2008 and the quality of marking is carefully monitored. This, alongside scrutiny of pupils' books during this visit, shows that there has been some improvement, although marking is still variable. There is some good practice evident, for example in the books of pupils in Year 4 where there are clear comments on how to improve. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 feel that marking does not yet provide enough assistance for them on how to improve particular pieces of work. Pupils value the targets they are set in writing and mathematics. These are accessible to them and well understood. The school's policy identifies that there should be opportunities for pupils to assess their own work but senior leaders recognise that there is limited evidence of the impact of this so far and further development is planned for this term.

Significant steps have been taken to develop the leadership of literacy and numeracy in Key Stage 2. In numeracy, the teacher has held this post since September 2008. She has received well planned support from the local authority's consultant in developing her role, underpinned by an appropriate action plan. She has checked teachers' planning, observed lessons, interviewed pupils and scrutinised samples of their work. As a result, she has a clear view of strengths and areas in need of further development. Developing the leadership of literacy has been affected by the staffing changes and the acting deputy headteacher has been carrying out this role for just over a term. She has received good support from the local authority's consultant, including assistance in undertaking observations of lessons in Key Stage 2. Aspects

of assessment practice from the Early Years Foundation Stage have been helpfully employed in Key Stage 2 to contribute to establishing a shared view of standards in writing. There is clarity on actions to be undertaken this term and recognition that a carefully planned handover to the deputy headteacher will be required when she resumes her post.

The local authority has provided good support. For example, the school improvement adviser and the literacy and numeracy consultants have been extensively involved in helping the school to address the improvements required by providing coaching, training and guidance tailored to teachers' individual needs. The authority has also arranged for a National Leader of Education, a headteacher in another local primary school, to work closely with the senior leadership. The local authority's statement of action did not meet Ofsted requirements as it did not identify how the school would be supported beyond the end of 2008. This has now been remedied.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Grahame Sherfield
Her Majesty's Inspector