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2 June 2009

Mrs Judith Mackie  
Acting Headteacher  
Shinfield St Mary's CofE Junior School  
Chestnut Crescent  
Shinfield  
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Dear Mrs Mackie

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help that you and your staff gave me when I inspected your school on 19 May 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to pupils, parents, the executive headteacher and the local authority representative for their contribution to the visit.

Since the last inspection, a number of changes in staff have occurred. The current acting headteacher took up post in January 2009, along with an executive headteacher. A headteacher has been appointed from September 2009.

As a result of the inspection on 29 September 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise achievement and standards, particularly in writing, by improving teaching and the use of assessment
- ensure that all lessons have a sharp purpose, are suitably challenging for all pupils and maintain a brisk pace
- use assessment, individual target setting and marking more effectively to accelerate pupils' progress.

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

The school's data and inspection evidence indicate that there has been some significant improvement in the quality of teaching. Teachers use varied approaches and pupils are engaged by their work and appreciate the opportunities to discuss their ideas, with talk partners and others, in order to extend and consolidate their learning. Lessons observed were underpinned by a good understanding of students' prior knowledge and frequent use of a range of assessment for learning strategies. Students enjoyed the brisk pace of learning and felt that teachers were always willing to help them. The very positive rapport that exists between students and



teachers gives rise to a supportive atmosphere in the classrooms, which helps to develop students' confidence. While listening skills appeared strong, speaking was underdeveloped. Appropriate support to develop teaching has been more focused since the spring term; as teachers have become increasingly aware of their own needs, senior leaders have directed training more effectively and the local authority advisers have been able to respond more to the needs of the school. The curriculum development advisers have, for example, provided support by modelling lessons, allowing the school senior leaders to undertake lesson observations.

The school is tracking students effectively and systems are becoming more robust. Teachers increasingly use this information in planning lessons and matching learning objectives more closely to individual needs. Some learning objectives are not as clear and there is not always sufficient challenge for higher-ability students. The school is also using tracking data to implement intervention strategies with increasing success in raising attainment further. The rate of progress students make has improved and, while all lessons observed were good or outstanding, the school's own data and the inspector's analysis of pupils work suggest that progress is not consistently good. Students do not yet make sufficient progress to make up for all of the previous underperformance. This is more marked in Years 5 and 6. Students have made some progress in developing writing skills but further work is still needed. Marking provides pupils with some clear and diagnostic support to enable progress but it is inconsistent in classes, and particularly between subjects.

The local authority has provided good support for the school. Regular and challenging meetings have ensured that the school improvement agenda has been at the forefront of the school's work. Curriculum development advisers are supporting teachers well, such as in learning support, which results in a clear and much more effective provision for students with additional needs. The needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have been identified, intervention strategies have been implemented and monitoring is more robust. The local authority secured the services of an executive headteacher who, together with the acting headteacher, is ensuring the improvement plan is implemented and monitored.

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

Paul Scott  
Her Majesty's Inspector