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Mrs Christine Harris
The Acting Headteacher
Westonzoyland Community Primary School
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Dear Mrs Harris

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 7 May 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 chair of governors and the leading school improvement adviser.

Since the school was last inspected, there have been some changes in staffing which have affected subject and senior leadership as well as teaching. Following an incident involving the release of asbestos into the school during building work, the headteacher has been on extended leave since September 2008. The deputy headteacher who is also the English subject leader has taken on the acting headship. A teacher has been employed on a temporary basis to cover her class teaching commitment. There is no acting deputy headteacher. A temporary increase in the hours of the special educational needs coordinator followed when a class teacher left the school for a new post in July 2008. The special educational needs coordinator also took on the role of science subject leader from September 2008.

As a result of the inspection on 6 December 2007, the school was asked to:

- ensure that more lessons are of the quality of the best; increase pace in some, and extend opportunities for pupils to learn through posing questions and researching
- extend the analysis and use of attainment data, already well compiled by the school, to evaluate and speed up pupils' progress, especially in science
- ensure that good cross-curricular links in lessons are used more consistently to increase interest and relevance, particularly for older pupils.



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 data and inspection evidence indicate that there has been some 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 a partner to develop their thinking. Lessons observed were underpinned by well planned sequences of activities and showed some good attention to meeting the needs of pupils with differing levels of understanding and skills. Sometimes too long was allowed for an activity, slowing the pace of the lesson, or opportunities were missed to probe pupils' thinking. Detailed discussions in staff meetings have been helpful in sharing and improving teaching strategies but other approaches, such as observing in colleagues' classrooms, watching demonstration lessons or visiting other schools have not yet been used. Pupils report that they enjoy the increased opportunities for them to pose questions and undertake independent research, such as in the work on famous scientists in Year 6.

The standards reached by pupils who left at the end of Year 6 in 2008 were below average overall and science was a particular weakness. These pupils made unsatisfactory progress. Some problems arose from the contamination and destruction of Year 6 resources and subsequent delays in replacing them. But, as the school has correctly identified, a key factor was that the underachievement of some pupils had not been tackled earlier in their school career, leaving too much to be done in Year 6. Since the start of the current school year, progress has improved as it has been more systematically checked through a range of approaches, including regular tests. Those in Year 6 who need additional help to reach expected standards, or who are at risk of underachieving, are receiving significant extra support in English and mathematics. The school's evidence of pupils' progress and inspection findings show that this is bearing fruit, most pupils are on track to reach standards broadly in line with likely national averages and the school is set to come close to its challenging targets. The acting headteacher is determined that underachievement will be tackled as soon as it is apparent. For example, she has already identified that additional support will be provided for a small number of Year 2 pupils this term to enable them to work more confidently in mathematics in Year 3. Science has had a more prominent place in the curriculum since September 2008 and there are more opportunities for pupils to take part in scientific investigations. Pupils report that they have more fun in science now and feel that they are doing better. Progress is more systematically checked and, although the school's data indicate that results are on track to be a little below average, progress in this subject has improved.

The school has established a number of topics where suitable links are made between subjects, such as the work on Anne Frank and World War II and the geography topic on different countries. Pupils enjoy these and the school has rightly identified that there is scope to develop this approach further.

The local authority has provided good support. The school improvement adviser spent a number of days in the school providing support for the acting headteacher at key points and now visits each month. The local authority has also provided additional funding to assist the school in meeting some of the extra staffing costs it is incurring. Funding to help to provide additional support in English and mathematics in Year 6 has been particularly useful.

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