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30 June 2009

Mr J Doyle
The Headteacher
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Dear Mr Doyle

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I visited your school on 24 June 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass my thanks to the staff, governor and teaching assistant I spoke to, and also to the delightful group of pupils who took me on a tour of the school.

As a result of the inspection on 5 and 6 November 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards and achievement in English and mathematics, particularly at Key Stage 1
- improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school, but particularly in Years 1 to 4
- ensure better use of assessment information to challenge and support all pupils to do their best
- provide clear action plans that include quantifiable milestones and place an appropriate emphasis on raising standards within a realistic timescale.

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 assessment information and evidence from this inspection show that there has been good progress in improving pupils' achievement in mathematics, and satisfactory progress in reading and writing. From the data provided, progress within the Early Years Foundation Stage remains good. The proportion of pupils in Years 1 to 6 who are working at age-appropriate levels is increasing, although this is not the case in all classes and year groups, and the number of pupils reaching age-related expectations is still not high enough.



This is because the quality of teaching and learning, although improving, is not yet uniformly reliable and the features of good or better teaching are not fully embedded across the school. The teaching seen in lessons during the visit, and the school's own records of lesson observations, indicate that there has been an increase in the proportion of lessons which are satisfactory or better, with an increasing number of good lessons. The school's monitoring identifies the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. However, not all comments are useful in improving teaching because some senior leaders do not have the skills required to provide meaningful and developmental feedback.

In addition, there are some important elements of good teaching that are not consistently seen across the school. The pace of some lessons is slow, with not enough being expected of pupils in terms of what they will produce or contribute. There is not enough use of challenge and questioning in all classes to get pupils to think and apply their learning, although teachers are improving their knowledge of age-related expectations.

The school has developed policies for teaching and learning, marking and assessment, which have been implemented following agreement by staff and governors. Teachers' regular assessment and marking of pupils' work help pupils to know how well they have done, but do not always clearly identify what they should do next to improve their work. In some cases, there is evidence in books that pupils have been given time and encouragement to follow the advice given, but this is not a regular feature as would be expected from consistent implementation of the new policy. The use of formative assessment within lessons is underdeveloped. This is hindered to some extent because teachers talk too much and do not allow enough time for pupils to discuss their work or explain their thinking. This reduces opportunities for teachers to gauge the level of pupils' understanding and plan the next steps in learning.

Moderation of pupils' work continues to be strengthened across the school, and is improving the teachers' ability to assess pupils' progress accurately. The school has begun to track these assessments effectively and systems are becoming more robust. The skills of teaching assistants are well used, for example in the reading recovery programme, with some examples of good communication between teachers and teaching assistants on how best to support children who have individual education plans and those who are underachieving. This is good practice.

Following the last inspection, the school speedily implemented action plans which concentrated upon the essential elements of setting up systems for monitoring the work of the school, and in tracking the progress of individual pupils. The school has moved on, and now the action plans are insufficiently focused upon precise outcomes for pupils, and do not show exactly how monitoring and evaluation will occur. The challenges for the school now are to sharply focus their actions and ensure that the impact can be monitored and, having built momentum, ensure that subject coordinators and other leaders continue to develop their skills in monitoring and leading.

The school has worked closely with local authority advisers and consultants which has been an essential part of growing expertise within the school. As a result, senior staff have a greater understanding of their broader role in raising standards and all teachers are becoming more aware of their accountability for pupils' progress. Local authority officers know the school well and have a clear understanding of what it needs to do to improve. Their evaluation of the school's effectiveness, as shown in visit notes, is astute and accurate.

Governors are playing an increasing role in monitoring the school's work, through their Action Plan Monitoring Committee's regular meetings, where they receive reports on progress of the school's actions from the headteacher. They are more aware of standards and rates of progress of pupils in the school and nationally and are becoming more able to provide support and challenge for the headteacher and staff.

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

Anne Newall
Additional Inspector