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Mr P Marsh
The Headteacher
Widey Court Primary School
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Dear Mr Marsh

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you, your staff and governors gave when I inspected your school on 16 June 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I noted that since the last inspection, changes have taken place in the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage, and the current temporary leader has been appointed to the permanent post from September 2009.

As a result of the inspection on 26 and 27 November 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards at Key Stage 1
- ensure that pupils make more rapid progress in writing across the school
- make better use of assessment information to ensure that all pupils, particularly higher attainers and those at an early stage of learning English, achieve at a faster rate
- ensure that school leaders are more rigorous in their monitoring and respond more rapidly when weaknesses are identified.

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.

At the time of my visit national tests and assessments at the end of Year 2 had been completed and marked by teachers. Although the results had yet to be formally moderated by the local authority, previous work with local authority staff suggests that the teachers' marking is likely to be broadly accurate. On this basis, the standards attained by pupils in the current Year 2 are significantly higher than those attained in 2008, especially at the higher Level 3 in reading and mathematics, and more generally in writing where the proportion attaining the nationally expected standard has risen from below 70% to above 90%. In Year 6, the school's much improved systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress also show that challenging targets are on track to be exceeded at the end of the year in English and



science. The proportions of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in particular are likely to have improved on 2008. Pupils are also on track to achieve the target for those attaining at least the nationally expected standard in both English and mathematics.

The school has taken successful steps to improve standards of pupils' writing. Correctly, these start in the Early Years Foundation Stage where changes to the curriculum, including the structured teaching of phonics, have enabled children to develop their interest and early writing skills. For older pupils, regular monitoring of the quality of teaching by senior staff, the School Improvement Partner and local authority staff has also led to improvements. Teachers are now regularly assessing and tracking pupils' progress, which is discussed at regular meetings with senior leaders where strategies are decided upon for accelerating the slow progress any pupils may be making. These are beginning to have a positive impact on progress, as are techniques such as a more consistent approach to the use of pupils' targets, marking that consistently shows them how to improve their work, and opportunities for pupils to assess their own and each other's work. The detailed tracking of progress and scrutiny of the work pupils are producing show improving progress across the school, including for groups such as boys and higher attaining pupils. However, the work of some pupils, especially in Year 3, still reflects a legacy of past underachievement. The school and local authority have not placed a sufficiently high priority on addressing the achievement of the small number of pupils at the early stages of learning English. While there is no evidence of underachievement among these pupils, some staff are unclear about what approaches to adopt to ensure they make the best possible progress.

The school and local authority moved quickly to rectify the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. The local authority's statement of action meets requirements and its actions to date have been effective, as have those of the recently appointed School Improvement Partner. While the quality and impact of monitoring have improved significantly, this is still undertaken mainly by senior leaders and local authority staff rather than by subject leaders, so the next planned step is rightly to involve these middle leaders more fully. The school remains reliant on the local authority to support some aspects of its work. For example, the newly appointed Early Years Foundation Stage leader has great potential but is inexperienced and will require further support and training in her new role.

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 Sadler
Additional Inspector