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Mr Richard Gower
The Headteacher
Kingsleigh Primary School
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Dear Mr Gower

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 1 July 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Would you please also pass my thanks to staff, pupils and governors for their time on a very busy school day?

There has been little staff turnover since the school's previous inspection in December 2008. The school roll is virtually unchanged since that time.

As a result of that inspection, the school was asked to:

- raise standards, notably in writing and mathematical problem-solving, ensuring that more able pupils do not underachieve and that the proportion of pupils reaching higher than average levels is at least consistent with the national average
- improve the use of assessment to set targets that will serve as reference points for individual pupils to measure progress and show how improvements can be made
- improve the quality of subject leadership and management with special reference to how pupils' achievements and standards are monitored and evaluated.

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 pupils' achievement. The decline in standards across the school has been arrested.

Pupils, including the more able, are now making satisfactory progress overall. Within this picture, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils have made good progress, making up some of the ground lost during their earlier school lives. Although standards of attainment are still lower than expected across the school, unvalidated results for Year 6 in 2009 show improvement on those attained by Year 6 in 2008. In English, results are the



highest recorded by the school over the past five years. Pleasingly, the percentage of pupils attaining the highest test level (Level 5) in English has risen as well.

Assessment results for Year 2 pupils have also risen this year. Writing is the area that shows most improvement on last year's results. This, together with evidence from pupils' exercise books in all year groups, demonstrates the increasing impact of the school's well focused work in this area.

Conversely, the school is aware that results in mathematics remain a weakness across the school. This subject now requires the same penetrating focus that has been brought to bear on writing.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. It has some good features, and some outstanding lessons were seen during this monitoring inspection. The headteacher has succeeded in raising the staff's expectations of what can be achieved by pupils. Typically, teachers are now planning to meet the needs of all ability groups. The role to be played by teaching assistants in supporting the learning of differing ability groups is detailed in these plans. As a result, in all lessons observed, teaching assistants were sensibly deployed. In all lessons, teachers clarify the learning objective and discuss success criteria so pupils know what they are aiming for and when they have made progress. Teachers use subject specific vocabulary effectively and encourage pupils to do the same. They are demanding more of high ability pupils who are clearly more effectively challenged than was the case six months ago. Teachers set well judged targets for pupils in English and mathematics. Pupils talk about their targets with enthusiasm and know that these are helping them to make progress. The administration of these targets in each classroom is not entirely uniform. This notwithstanding, the writing work scrutinised by HMI was very accurately assessed and matched to the correct National Curriculum level. The local authority is to be commended for its effective support in this area.

Where lessons were less strong, teachers gave pupils too little thinking time, rushed pupils' responses and, at times, missed opportunities to build on their answers. In one or two lessons, teachers did not consistently use a wide range of questioning skills to ensure that boys and girls were equally engaged, and the pace of learning dropped. Behaviour was, however, at least satisfactory in every classroom, and some teachers demonstrate particular skill at devising tasks and posing questions to engage and enthuse all groups of pupils, including the most vulnerable.

The school acknowledges that marking remains an area for development. All marking is regular. The best tells pupils what steps they need to develop their learning further or addresses pupils' longer term subject targets. The least effective remains too perfunctory and superficial.

As at the time of the previous inspection, the headteacher provides strong leadership. He has transmitted a sense of purpose and urgency to staff, pupils and parents. He has been instrumental in devising a raising attainment plan which lies at the heart of all work to improve the school. This plan is ambitious, well constructed

and provides a focus for stakeholders to judge the impact of actions the school has taken to improve provision and outcomes for pupils. Formal evaluation arrangements are not detailed within the plan. As the local authority gradually cedes responsibility in this area to governors, clarity about such arrangements will become pressing.

Senior leaders have a clear and accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning across the school, gained through a regular programme of formal lesson observations. The role of middle leaders in monitoring pupils' achievements is developing well. Middle leaders are increasingly involved in evaluating aspects of teaching and learning and undertaking analyses of standards in their subject areas, but are not yet reporting formally to governors. The inclusion coordinator has undertaken valuable work to assess the impact of particular interventions on different groups of children, and use the results to align intervention packages more closely to pupils' needs.

Governors who met with HMI are highly committed to the school. They are experienced, visit the school regularly, and provide good support for senior leaders. However, published governing body minutes do not currently detail the challenge provided to the school by the governing body.

The local authority is working to good effect to promote improvement at Kingsleigh Primary School. The School Improvement Partner has acted as 'gateway' for this support. This has ensured that support has been focused, valued by the school, and has made a good impact.

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

Bradley Simmons
Her Majesty's Inspector