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Mrs E Owen
Headteacher
Ranworth Square Primary School
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Dear Mrs Owen

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 12 November 2009 and for the information which you provided during my visit. I am also grateful to the chair of governors and the local authority (LA) for assistance with this visit.

As a result of the inspection on 24 and 25 March 2009, the school was asked to:

- Raise standards and improve achievement in English and mathematics throughout the school, particularly for boys of all abilities and the more able girls
- Eradicate inadequate teaching and ensure tasks set in lessons match the learning needs of each pupil and provide sufficient challenge
- Ensure that every teacher is held to account for their pupils' progress and that leaders at all levels drive school improvement more urgently
- Improve pupils' attendance.

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.

Since the previous inspection, the school has done a great deal to lay the foundations for improvements in pupils' learning and in raising their achievement. Senior staff and governors are putting the concerns of the past behind them and are working purposefully and with urgency to get the school back on track. No time has been lost and excuses for the schools past deficiencies have not been tolerated. Morale has improved, teamwork is effective and all staff are stepping up to the



mark. There is a strong momentum for improving the school. The pace of change has accelerated and significant steps have been taken to prioritise actions and eliminate inadequate teaching. Decisive action has been taken to redeploy staff and new appointments have been made. As a result, the legacy of underachievement is being tackled more effectively and there is a greater acceptance of the collective responsibility for driving the work to raise standards.

Pupils are more positive about their school and say that many things have improved in recent weeks. They strongly agree that teaching is much better with more 'fun' activities. They can sense that they are making better progress in their work. As one boy commented, 'I know I'm learning more now because I'm only in Year 4 and I know words like optimistic and tolerated and what they mean'. Others commented on how pupils' behaviour was much better in lessons because of improvements in teaching and the excellent work of the learning mentor. 'People are too busy in class now to mess about in lessons'. 'We always have someone to talk to about our problems' were typical comments.

Pupils' current work, as well as the unvalidated test results for 2009, shows that increasing numbers of pupils, including the boys and higher achieving girls are making better progress than previously and that standards are beginning to rise. This is also evident from the school's records which track pupils' achievement. By the end of Year 6, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected level 4 has risen from 38% to 78% in English and 71% to 84% in mathematics over the past year. In addition, a notable success was that in reading over a quarter of pupils in Year 6 made gains of approximately one national curriculum level in just one year, reflecting the improving impact of the school's work and intervention.

This rising trend is because the school has successfully introduced several strategies to raise pupils' achievement which in turn are leading to improvements in classroom practice. There are clearer expectations of the progress pupils should make and improvements to tracking systems are enabling staff to identify more clearly pupils who are underachieving. There are regular reviews of how well pupils are progressing and staff have a much stronger awareness of what each child can do and what they need to learn next. Staff are now held to account for the progress that their pupils make. Furthermore, teachers are gaining confidence in judging the level of pupils' work and are beginning to take greater responsibility for their own practice. As a consequence, the school is better placed to judge how well pupils are achieving, the planning of support and intervention is much sharper and target setting is more effective.

Nevertheless, while improving, the progress pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 is not yet high enough. This is particularly the case for middle to higher achieving pupils. This is because of a legacy of inconsistent teaching which has resulted in gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.



Another factor contributing to rising standards is the increasing progress pupils make in lessons due to improvements in teaching and learning. No inadequate teaching was observed. Although not yet consistent in all classes, a whole-school focus on training and developing teachers' awareness of effective practice is increasing opportunities for pupils to be more engaged in their work and work independently. In the best lessons teachers have the confidence to allow pupils to direct their own learning with carefully crafted opportunities to discuss and share their ideas with others. For example, pupils in Year 2 were able to write poems about the weather by discussing and recording appropriate words and phrases to use. With excellent prompting from the class teacher they were able to put forward their own suggestions such as cloudy, lashing down, puddles and muddy water. Where teaching is less strong, pupils' work is sometimes over-directed and opportunities to fully engage pupils in their learning are not always taken. Senior leaders are correct in recognising that this is area for further improvement.

Much of the improvement in pupils' learning is down to the strengthening of the way in which the school checks on the quality of teaching and judges the effectiveness of learning. Procedures for monitoring pupils' progress in books are clearer. Lesson observations by senior staff are providing teachers with clearer targets to improve their practice. Systems for marking pupils' work are improving. There are some good examples where pupils are given clear advice on how to improve their work and reach the next level. The introduction of targets has given pupils a focus but as yet teachers do not always refer to them well enough when marking the pupils' work.

Attendance is improving, although it is still below average. The school continues to seek ways of promoting good attendance through special certificates, through the work of the learning mentor and through regular contact with parents. Pupils are fully aware of the consequences of persistent absence. Many of them are encouraged to attend more regularly because of the recent improvements in the quality of their learning. 'We like coming to school now because it's more fun'. 'The school is better than it used to be', were typical comments.

The school has taken every opportunity to benefit from the advice and support from local advisers and consultants. The whole-school commitment to improvement and the positive way the school acts on advice has strengthened its capacity to improve.

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

Steve Isherwood
Her Majesty's Inspector

