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Ms Katherine Wooder
Snowfields Primary School incorporating
the Tim Jewell Unit for Children with Autism
Kirby Grove
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Dear Ms Wooder

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 Wednesday 30 September 2009 and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the staff, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and the school improvement partner who were very helpful in providing me with information about the school's work.

Following the last inspection, a number of staff changes have taken place. Three middle managers with responsibilities as subject coordinators were appointed to replace the teachers who left at the end of the summer term 2009. Of the two experienced teachers on maternity leave, one returned at the start of the current term and the second will resume her post on a part-time basis before the end of term.

As a result of the inspection on 4 and 5 February 2009, the school was asked to:

- Raise achievement and standards, so that pupils are better prepared for their future lives, especially in English and mathematics
- Improve teaching and learning, so that more lessons are good and containing meaningful challenges for pupils
- Enliven the curriculum, so that it is more fun and relevant to the needs of the 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.

There was a further decline in the 2009 provisional national test results, with fewer pupils reaching age-related expectations, particularly in English and mathematics. Many of the Year 6 pupils had made inadequate progress throughout Key Stage 2



and although those who received individual tuition made good progress, most of the cohort was unable to make up the lost ground in two terms. As a result, the target, slightly above that set for primary schools, was not achieved. There was a significant improvement in Year 2 where most pupils reached the expected level in English, mathematics and science. While progress was at least satisfactory, too few pupils reached the higher levels. Barriers, such as high staff turnover, behavioural difficulties among a small number of pupils and inadequate teaching, which prevented pupils from making at least satisfactory progress, have now been addressed. School data indicate better progress in all year groups, including the autistic unit, with most pupils on track to achieve or exceed their targets. Good tracking systems have been introduced which enable staff to monitor pupils' progress and identify those at risk of underachieving.

Much work has been done to improve the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. As a result, it is at least satisfactory with much that is good. Effective coaching and partnership work are exposing teachers to good practice in outstanding schools in the primary challenge school programme. Leaders and managers at all levels have used training and the revised teaching policy to raise expectations of what pupils can do and achieve. The termly evaluation cycle and moderation of pupils' work have also contributed to the improvements in teaching. Marking has also improved and teachers are focused on assessing pupils' work thoroughly and giving them clear comments and individualised targets on how they can improve it further.

The senior staff have ensured that professional development is linked to the school's priorities and the needs of each member of staff. This has led to the middle managers developing their subject knowledge and being better equipped to manage their duties and share the benefits of their professional development widely. For example, the literacy and numeracy coordinators have drawn on the expertise of consultants and are well informed about adapting and using proven practices to accelerate pupils' progress in English and mathematics.

The improvements in teaching have helped staff to develop a clear understanding of the headteacher's vision of raising standards. Middle managers are confident about using data to assess pupils' progress and adjusting plans to meet the needs of groups and individual pupils. During the visit, pupils confirmed that they are motivated to work to the 'best of their ability' because their teachers listen to them during the weekly planning meetings and take their views into consideration. Pupils also said that, 'lessons are now fun and stimulating'. The school recognises that there is still more to be done, for example in providing challenge for the more able pupils and ensuring that activities in lessons are well balanced.

There has been a marked improvement in the curriculum. A more creative and fun curriculum is emerging. Changes such as the introduction of options and half termly topic work have helped to highlight for pupils how they can use basic skills in all areas of their work. The school is ensuring that pupils can develop good literacy



skills by introducing a wide variety of texts, using talk to approach learning and increasing the time allocated for writing. For example, drama is used to develop pupils' communication skills so that they can articulate their ideas clearly when writing for different purposes. Strategies such as learning outside the classroom are used to develop the curriculum. For example, records of pupils' comments are evaluated to identify suitable methods to stimulate and consolidate learning. The senior team and staff meet regularly with pupils to find out their views on what helps them to learn best. This has led pupils to say that they are 'more secure' and 'confident' about their learning because their teachers listen to them and make adjustments to help them understand the work. The school acknowledges that there is still more to do to finalise the new curriculum model.

The satisfactory improvement is driven by the effective and determined leadership of the senior team and managers, ably supported by an enthusiastic staff team and a very well informed interim chair of governors from the local authority. A re-constituted and very experienced governing body is effectively holding the school to account. The local authority has revised the statement of action, which now meets requirements. The authority has provided very good support and tailored all interventions to the school's needs. At this stage, capacity for development is satisfactory and improving.

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

Carmen Rodney
Her Majesty's Inspector