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Richard Marsh
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Marsh

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 13 October 2009 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to staff, the vice chair of governors and local authority personnel who met with me during my visit. As well as these discussions, together we visited parts of six lessons and I scrutinised a range of documents and information, including an evaluation of parents' views prepared by an external body. I checked the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils and found them to meet requirements.

As a result of the inspection on 10–11 February 2009, the school was asked to:

- use assessment information more effectively to raise the level of challenge in lessons, particularly for higher-attaining pupils
- monitor teaching and learning more thoroughly to ensure that they are of a consistently high quality across the school
- use data effectively and strategically to evaluate the impact of actions being taken to check they are raising standards.

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.

In the summer of 2009, assessments showed improved progress by children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. At the end of Year 6, standards of English and science were raised and the school's challenging targets were met. In mathematics, standards attained were lower and targets were not met. With the support of the local authority, staff have analysed the reasons for this and have concluded that there were weaknesses in the teaching of mental mathematics, which are now being rectified.



Teachers are beginning to use a range of assessment techniques successfully to raise standards. Regular assessments are identifying those pupils in need of additional help, and effective interventions are being put in place. Work generally is now better matched to the needs and abilities of the pupil. Pupils have a good understanding of their targets and are gaining in confidence, partly because the same approach is used across the school. Pupils assess their own and each others' work with accuracy, and in some classes this is used well by the teacher to identify learning points such as the precise meanings of words. The quality of teachers' marking has improved and most includes guidance to show the pupil how to improve his or her work. Scrutiny of work shows that all pupils, including the more able, are making better progress as a result of these approaches. Variations remain, however, for instance in the legibility of teachers' writing to pupils of the relevant age.

Since the inspection, there has been regular monitoring of teaching and learning by senior leaders and local authority staff. These show an improvement in teaching, with inadequate teaching significantly reduced and an increase in the proportion of good or better teaching. These trends were confirmed by our joint observations, which also showed that the school's own assessments are broadly accurate. Senior leaders acknowledge that there is still too little teaching that is good or better, and the school has rightly set itself ambitious targets to improve teaching further. Positive features of the teaching and learning we observed were the use of interesting tasks that promoted positive attitudes and behaviour by pupils, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and good independent learning by pupils in Years 3 to 6. Weaker features included attempts to use too wide a range of teaching strategies at once, leading to confusion for pupils and, in some classes, limited adult support for pupils when they needed help.

With local authority support, senior leaders have evaluated a wide range of approaches to the recording and use of assessment data. They have settled on approaches that have the potential to provide the school with information that will enable stakeholders, including governors, to rigorously evaluate the impact of the school's work on pupils' attainment and progress. There have already been some positive outcomes, such as the identification of mental mathematics as an area of weakness, but the systems are not yet populated with data to an extent that enables progress to be evaluated over the longer term. Staff are keen to use the data to improve their teaching, and subject leaders show a good level of understanding of the importance and value of this work.

The local authority has provided the school with good support. Its statement and plan of action were assessed as meeting requirements. A particular strength is the consistency of the approach of local authority staff, described by a senior leader as 'crystal clear'. However, the school remains heavily reliant on this support and plans to reduce its level have yet to be implemented.



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

