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Mr Richard Mellard
Headteacher
Meadowfield Primary School
Halton Moor Avenue
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Dear Mr Mellard

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 9 December 2009, for the information which you provided during my visit, and for the opportunity to speak with one of the governing body.

Staffing is more stable than last year, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. One teacher joined the school in September.

As a result of the inspection on 5 and 6 May 2009, the school was asked to:

- improve achievement and raise standards in English, mathematics and science for all pupils
- raise teachers' expectations and increase the pace of learning and level of challenge in those lessons where teaching is not sufficiently strong, to enable pupils to make more rapid progress
- make sure all teachers' marking matches the best practice in letting pupils know what they need to do next to improve their work
- ensure pupils' targets are consistently challenging enough to raise 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.

Standards remain low but show improvement. Following a dip in 2008, test results for Year 6 were higher in 2009. These pupils had made the expected progress from very low levels at the end of Year 2, and better progress was made in English. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities made similar progress. Children in the Reception Year, too, achieved better than the year before, although well below national expectations. However, pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Year 2 did not rise appreciably. Especially for boys of this age, writing is weak.



Pupils' targets are now challenging enough to raise standards. The school has set suitably high expectations for each pupil's progress this year. If met, pupils' attainment in Year 6 would meet the government's minimum expectation in English and mathematics. Senior staff are monitoring teachers' assessments to spot any pupils who do not keep up with their targets. This tracking reveals a mixed picture. Based on the school's assessments, considerably more pupils in Year 6 this autumn are on track to reach the standards expected of them in English and mathematics than was the case last year. Pupils' average progress in Years 3, 5 and 6 is meeting the school's expectations in some respects, but there is some way to go before it is consistently good.

Attendance is below average. Last year, attendance declined. So far this year, attendance has improved and there have been no exclusions. During the inspection pupils were, for the most part, happily absorbed in their work, although there were minor lapses. The school is reviewing its safeguarding arrangements. Its central record of all who work regularly with children meets current requirements. Systems for reporting concerns about children's safety and well-being are clearly explained.

With help from the local authority, the school's leaders have sharpened the accuracy of teachers' assessment. Teachers have been guided, where necessary, to pitch lessons at a more appropriate level. Senior staff check that teachers' plans provide the support and challenge needed to move all pupils forward at a good pace. Observations in classrooms indicate that this is having a positive effect across the age range, but that there is still some variability. Teachers' plans make clear what pupils should learn and sometimes note the outcomes. Work set is interesting and adapted to pupils' different abilities. In the better lessons seen, teachers engage pupils well through effective use of resources and stimulating activities such as drama and investigations. They also set clear expectations about how pupils will learn for themselves and provide good opportunities for them to practise new skills independently. They keep a close eye on the progress pupils make, adjusting their teaching to make sure everybody moves forwards. However, in some observed lessons, pupils spent too long on insufficiently challenging activities and expectations of their behaviour were not high enough. In these cases, the pace of learning was not fast enough to make up for past underachievement.

Another focus of monitoring and professional development has been the quality of teachers' marking. A sample of pupils' books indicated that it is now quite normal for pupils to receive well-focused advice about the next step they need to make, especially in their writing. In the best cases, pupils take specific action in response to the advice, and the teacher checks this is done. Sometimes in mathematics and occasionally in science or foundation subjects, too, pupils' progress benefits from productive feedback or discussion with their teachers.

The school has made good use of suitable and much appreciated support from the local authority in tackling the areas for improvement. Progress on the improvement



plan is being kept under review by a monitoring group which involves some of the governing body and local authority officers. The local authority has checked that the school is taking account of carers' and parents' views on its improvement, so that the post-inspection action plan is now fit for purpose.

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

Susan Bowles
Her Majesty's Inspector