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Mr Philip Searson
Headteacher
Stretton Handley Church of England Primary School
Beresford Lane
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Dear Mr Searson

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 14 December 2009 and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the staff and pupils for their courtesy and also to the chair of governors and the School Improvement Partner for discussing progress with me at such short notice.

Since the previous inspection, governors have appointed an extra part-time teacher. This was to largely eliminate the use of supply staff and to release adequate time out of class for the headteacher to lead and manage the school. There have been considerable improvements to the facilities provided for pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

As a result of the inspection on 9 December 2008, the school was asked to:

- improve the teaching, curriculum and overall provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- improve standards in writing by providing more cross-curricular writing opportunities, and by fully stretching the most able pupils
- develop the leadership roles of the governors and key staff so that the headteacher can devolve some of his many responsibilities
- Implement the planned curriculum developments so that the available teaching time is used in a more imaginative way.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.



Since the 2008 inspection, the school has made considerable progress in closing the gap between pupils' below average attainment in Year 6 and the average for the country as a whole. Pupils start in the Reception class with broadly average attainment. This standard is now almost maintained in English and mathematics as the pupils move through the school. Although there is still a legacy of previous underachievement, accurate data show that most pupils are now making broadly adequate progress. A small number of pupils are still not doing as well as they should but just as many are exceeding expectations.

Writing and competence in number are improving as the school sets ever more challenging targets and monitors pupils' progress carefully. Previous National Curriculum test results in Year 6 have shown that expected proportions of pupils have been reaching Level 4 in English, mathematics and science but that the school was falling short at the higher Level 5. There is now evidence of higher level work emerging in English and mathematics in Year 6. However, progress and standards in science are still too low and require urgent attention. The school fully recognises this shortcoming because it has deliberately concentrated on improving English and mathematics as a first priority following its last inspection.

There has been a good improvement in the provision for the children in the Early Years Foundation stage. The curriculum has developed well in response to the criticisms of the previous inspection and now provides children with the opportunity to find things out for themselves, make decisions and choices and develop skills of independence. Drawing on valuable guidance from the Local Authority, the school has vastly improved the outside area. Watching children develop their speaking, social and decision-making skills is now a pleasing experience. The school's records show that pupils in the Reception class are now making at least satisfactory progress in most areas of the curriculum but that there is still some work to be done in writing.

Further up the school, pupils fully recognise that there has been an improvement in the school's curriculum which is enabling them to have more opportunities to develop their writing. They say that they enjoy the way that they have a choice in topic work. For example, in their study of the Victorian era, they were able to choose the inventions that they wanted to research. Through the provision of three major themes and topics for each year group, there is now a far wider range of opportunity than previously to write for a range of audiences and at length. These new arrangements are beginning to answer the previous inspection's criticisms and add a more imaginative and creative dimension to the curriculum.

The governors and headteacher are spearheading the school's drive for improvement with determination and effectiveness. Governors are well informed about the school's strengths and the areas which still need to be improved. Since the 2008 inspection, they have taken a far more active role in monitoring its work. They have a high profile in the school, visit lessons and ask probing questions about the

progress that pupils are making. A relentless search for higher standards is helping to drive improvement because accountability for the quality of pupils' work is clearly identified through the robust tracking system that the school uses. The school development plan clearly sets out an agenda for change. It focuses strongly on improving the quality of teaching and raising attainment. However, the headteacher has still not delegated enough of his many responsibilities to other members of the teaching staff.

This monitoring visit included a check on the school's safeguarding procedures and found them to be secure and meeting current requirements.

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

John Paddick
Additional Inspector