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Mrs M Farnan  
Headteacher  
Garvestone Community Primary School  
Dereham Road  
Garvestone,  
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Norfolk NR9 4AD

Dear Mrs Farnan

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 19 November, and for the information that you provided during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to all of your staff and the children; it was a pleasure to meet them.

As a result of the inspection on 19 May 2009, the school was asked to: bring together governors, the headteacher and the local authority to discuss the leadership and management of the school and its capacity to improve. The school was also required to: conduct a thorough self-evaluation, plan and monitor the changes made, establish a robust monitoring and evaluation programme that enhances provision and outcomes, and finally to improve the leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the provision available.

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.

Governors and the local authority have provided the headteacher with additional non-contact time so she has appropriate time to manage the school. Governors, the headteacher and a number of local authority officers meet regularly as a project board. The minutes of these meetings reveal a consistent focus on enhancing both the governors' and the headteacher's capacity to monitor and evaluate provision. The local authority has appointed an additional governor with significant experience

to the school. The local authority school improvement partner and other advisory staff have helped to reorganise teaching and managerial activities.

Appropriate improvement plans have been put in place and the headteacher has almost completed a new self-evaluation document. This document takes a more realistic view of the school, although some of the sections are overly descriptive. A key aspect of the notice to improve judgment was the absence of a well-structured programme to monitor and evaluate teaching. HMI scrutinised the lesson monitoring conducted since the beginning of term and found it to be broadly accurate. However, evidence forms previously compiled by the school tend to be descriptive and some lacked a firm evaluative conclusion.

HMI observed teaching in all settings and conducted a joint observation of lessons with the headteacher. The comments she offered broadly corresponded with the judgements given by HMI. The formal evaluation of this exercise noted the progress made in the quality of teaching and identified the need to focus lessons on how learning outcomes might be improved. The most effective teaching facilitated learning with well-structured questions that engaged the pupils' attention; however, opportunities were missed in all lessons to provide short well resourced tasks and/or challenges that provided opportunities for pupils to gain new knowledge in a simple context. Inconsistencies in the quality of questioning placed a barrier on pupil progress because staff sometimes failed to develop questions and/ or ideas when summarising the collective contributions of the group.

The very small number of pupils in each year group mean that comparison with national averages must be treated with caution. However, the provisional results of the 2009 Key Stage 1 teacher assessments provide a similar picture to those secured in the last two years. The results of pupils aged 7 are above average for writing and mathematics but have varied for reading. Similarly, the results of the national tests in Key Stage 2 follow a pattern established in previous years; overall standards and achievement have improved with pupils making good progress in English. However, the pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics remains weaker than in English and science, a factor in the school's results for three of the last four years. Outcomes in science were average.

The school has begun to use the local authority's achievement tracker system but as yet has been unable to make best use of this material. The limited number of pupils in the school should enable the inclusion of all available data on pupil progress to be placed into a simple visual format that staff and governors can see at a glance and use consistently.

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is regularly combined with that for Key Stage 1 pupils. Where this is most effective, the adults working with these pupils maintain a clear focus on core skills. In one session, a small group of pupils were effectively guided through a story; the teaching assistant leading the group made good use of information and communication technology and her questions carefully

linked prior learning to new language acquisition. Small group work provided for the youngest individuals was appropriate and they benefited from the oral work developed with Key Stage1 pupils. Outside play facilities are utilised appropriately and some good small group work was observed. In a school with only 38 pupils it was hard to discern any appreciable difference between the leadership of the school and that of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

*David Jones*

Her Majesty's Inspector