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Mr Alec Smith
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Dear Mr Smith

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave me when I inspected your school on 10 February 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Will you pass on my thanks to members of the governing body, the representative of the local authority and the group of Year 6 pupils who spent time talking with me?

A permanent headteacher took up post on 1 January 2010. Since September 2009, two teachers have returned following maternity leave.

As a result of the inspection on 30 June and 1 July 2009, the school was asked to raise standards in writing for all and in mathematics, particularly for girls, so that more pupils achieve their full potential; and, ensure that all pupils whatever their age, ability or gender, receive the best possible teaching so that the rapid progress made by some is available to all.

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.

Since the previous inspection, the school has received the detailed analysis of pupils' performance in national tests for pupils in Year 6 who left the school in July 2009. These results show a significant improvement in pupils' attainment in writing and improvement in mathematics over the previous year. Most groups of pupils performed as well as similar groups nationally. However, the group entitled to free school meals and the group at school action plus on the school's register of special educational needs performed significantly below similar groups nationally. In mathematics, girls underachieved against girls nationally.



Evidence from the visit, together with the school's detailed tracking data, indicates that attainment in writing and mathematics is broadly average and that most pupils are on track to achieve their challenging targets. As a result, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In mathematics, girls of above average and average ability show enthusiasm in lessons and are keen to explain their mathematical thinking. Lower ability girls do not always receive sufficient support as a group, especially in understanding the work they are expected to do. Pupils show greater confidence in writing for a wide range of purposes and audiences. However, in Year 5, the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation is not consistently good enough as is their use of spelling, grammar and punctuation. The school tracks the performance of groups of pupils using formal assessments three times a year. Evidence from the visit indicates that this is not often enough, especially for vulnerable groups, to ensure that pupils do not 'stand still' in the progress they make.

Teaching is improving and the higher proportion of good teaching contributes to improved attainment and progress. Teachers' lesson planning is good, especially in the way it is intended to meet the range of learning needs within their class. Whilst teachers in their planning identify 'success criteria' for each group, these are not always shared with pupils so that they understand whether or not they have been successful. Teachers' marking is good and pupils say that it helps them understand their next steps in learning. Pupils know their targets in literacy and numeracy and negotiate with their teacher when they think they have reached them. However, the date when a target is achieved is not always recorded so it is difficult to see the rate at which pupils move through their targets. Teachers and teaching assistants provide good support in most lessons for groups of pupils or one-to-one teaching. Effective use is made of interactive whiteboards to explain or model new learning. There are occasions when teachers are not sufficiently flexible in supporting groups who have not fully understood the task. As a result, this leads to a lack of concentration and insufficient progress.

The local authority statement of action fulfils requirements. The local authority has provided good support to the school and to the governing body, especially during a period of nearly two years when the school had six interim consultant headteachers. Local authority inspectors, the School Improvement Partner and advanced skills teachers support the school effectively, especially in improving the quality of teaching. The local authority recognises (and this is echoed by pupils) that the greatest current need for the school is the stability provided by the newly-appointed headteacher.

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 Curtis
Additional Inspector

