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Miss A Balson
Mere Green Combined Primary School
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Dear Miss Balson

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 3 February 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, staff, Chair of Governors and local authority representatives for taking the time to talk to me. It was particularly helpful to spend part of the day with you observing lessons, looking at pupils' work and analysing assessment information.

Since the school was inspected in July 2009 there have been a substantial number of staff changes, particularly in Key Stage 2, where three new teachers have been appointed. A temporary teacher is currently working in Year 3. Two new members of the governing body have been appointed.

As a result of the inspection on 7-8 July 2009, the school was asked to:

- Raise the standards and achievement of writing and mathematics throughout the school, especially those of lower and middle ability pupils.
- Ensure that all senior and middle managers understand their roles and responsibilities, and are held to account for improving pupils' progress.

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.

Robust systems have been put in place by senior managers to regularly review and analyse pupils' progress. Teachers have a better understanding of how well their pupils are progressing and there is now a greater emphasis on accountability. The school is in a stronger position to ensure that all pupils now make at least satisfactory progress in their work.

Since the last inspection, the school has brought together the Nursery and Reception classes to create a unified Early Years Foundation Stage. The majority of children entering the Nursery are working below the expected levels in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Despite fewer than half the children in Nursery transferring to Reception, by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage the large majority of children achieve the expected levels in mathematical development. They make particularly good gains in communication, language and literacy skills, although writing is not as strong as other aspects.

In 2009 attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was significantly below average. Results in reading and writing improved from 2008, but standards remained well below national averages. In mathematics, good gains were made bringing standards broadly in line with national averages. Moderated teacher assessments in December 2009 indicate that a greater proportion of pupils, at all ability levels, in Years 1 and 2 are beginning to achieve the levels expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, 79% of pupils in Year 1 and 85% of pupils in Year 2 are on track to achieve the expected level in mathematics by July 2010.

In 2009 at the end of Key Stage 2 results declined. Pupils in this year group did not reach the standards of which they were capable because of previous underachievement and unforeseen staffing difficulties. The most recent school data indicates that rates of progress made by pupils who are middle or lower ability, are similar to those achieved by all pupils. Progress in Years 3 to 6 is beginning to improve, but there are variations between year groups. It is strongest in Year 6, where 68% of pupils are now on track to achieve level 4 or better in mathematics, 72% in reading and 68% in writing. In Years 3, 4 and 5, progress is variable. These year groups have been affected by staffing difficulties in the past and a legacy of underachievement, although rates of progress are improving.

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is beginning to impact positively on pupils' progress. The school has recently recruited more support staff and revised their role within lessons. As a result, pupils are well supported and this is contributing positively to improving outcomes. Regular training from the local authority, alongside robust support from senior leaders, is beginning to improve the effectiveness of teaching and accelerate pupils' progress. Challenging targets have been set for 2010 which indicate an improvement in attainment across the school. However, these targets will not be achieved unless the quality of teaching continues to improve further.

Lessons sampled during the inspection were judged to be satisfactory overall. Pupils enjoyed their learning and worked well together or independently. Behaviour and classroom relationships were seen to be consistently good. Teachers' expectations are at an appropriate level and lessons are carefully planned to meet a wide range of needs and abilities. The school has introduced success criteria and a new marking policy to help pupils and teachers judge how well they are doing in lessons. On

occasion, the success criteria are too broad and not specific enough for pupils to judge whether or not they have been met. During the inspection, a range of pupils' books sampled indicated that teachers were marking work regularly with positive comments. In the best examples, teachers gave clear guidance to pupils on what they needed to do to improve their work further or reach the next level. This practice is not yet consistent across the school. Opportunities for writing across the curriculum are at an early stage of development.

Leadership and management have been strengthened since the last inspection. All leadership roles and responsibilities have been reviewed and new leaders have been appointed for mathematics, reading and writing. The governors have appointed a new deputy headteacher who will be joining the senior leadership team after Easter. Senior leaders regularly present their findings from monitoring visits to the governing body. Newly appointed governors bring additional skills and expertise that are matched to the needs of the school. This expertise is being used effectively to improve outcomes for pupils. The Chair of Governors has a sound understanding of pupil progress tracking data and is able to challenge senior leaders and hold them to account.

Members of the school leadership team and teachers regularly use tracking information to provide targeted support for pupils who are at risk of underachieving. The quality of teaching is frequently monitored and helpful feedback given to teachers to improve their effectiveness. As a result, the quality of teaching is beginning to improve, with a greater proportion of good or better lessons observed by senior leaders. The school has moved forward positively since it was last inspected. The work of the headteacher, chair of governors and local authority representatives has been effective. Good management systems, particularly for the monitoring and evaluation of performance, have been established. Self-evaluation by senior staff is realistic and accurate. The school recognises that more work remains to be done to further improve the quality of teaching and accelerate pupils' progress.

During the inspection safeguarding procedures were checked and found to meet the latest requirements.

The local authority has produced a satisfactory statement of action to support the school. They have provided good support and training for all staff. The local authority's review of the school in December 2009 has provided the school with an accurate assessment of progress and some helpful areas for further development.

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

Marian Harker
Her Majesty's Inspector