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Mr J Crawford
Sinfin Primary School
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Dear Mr Crawford

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 27 January 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit.

Since the last inspection, there has been a change of class teacher in one of the five classes.

As a result of the inspection on 9–10 June 2009, the school was asked to:

- Improve pupils' standards and progress in writing and mathematics throughout the school.
- Increase the amount of good teaching and, in particular, ensure that teaching is closely matched to pupils' specific needs and consistently challenges them.
- Increase opportunities to practise and consolidate literacy and numeracy skills across other areas of the curriculum.
- Continue to develop further appropriate links between subjects so that the curriculum is more thought-provoking, enjoyable and interesting for pupils.

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.

The school's leadership has focused on improving standards and progress in writing and mathematics by developing the skills of teachers and adopting a number of strategies designed to improve the curriculum in these areas. In mathematics, these include a focus on mental arithmetic and a 'problem of the week' for pupils to solve; while in writing, increased emphasis in all classes is placed on improving pupils' understanding of the characteristics of good writing together with the daily teaching of phonics and spelling for all pupils from Reception to Year 5. The data gathered by the school to help track pupils' progress does not yet provide evidence of the impact of these initiatives, since they are relatively new. However, a scrutiny of pupils' work shows that satisfactory gains in learning are being made. An exception to this is the



good progress in writing made by pupils in Year 1. From very low starting points, illustrated by basic 'mark-making', with little evidence of understanding about letter formation, initial letter sounds or spacing between words, pupils are now able to write simple sentences with recognisable letters and some correctly spelt monosyllabic words. Overall, attainment in writing and mathematics remains low because of the legacy of underachievement in previous years.

The school's leadership has improved the quality of teaching, but this remains satisfactory overall. Teachers are good at managing and organising their pupils, and relate well to them. They plan carefully and increasingly make good use of opportunities for pupils to practise and develop skills in numeracy and literacy across a range of other subjects. For example, the history theme about castles in Years 1 and 2 provides a very good vehicle for the development of pupils' skills in literacy. Because this topic captures pupils' imagination they readily refer to books for information and are keen to write about the subject. In all lessons seen, the climate for learning was good and was underpinned by pupils' good behaviour. A key improvement in teaching is that learning objectives are now made clear to the pupils. However, the success criteria which underpin these learning objectives, by providing the necessary layers of challenge for pupils of different levels of attainment, generally lack clarity and precision. The lack of linkage between the success criteria and the National Curriculum statements of attainment means that pupils' progress is not being accelerated as sharply as it might be. This critical lack of linkage is also evident in the targets set for pupils to achieve. Those in Year 6 interviewed during the course of my visit knew clearly what National Curriculum levels they were working at, but did not know precisely what they needed to do to reach the next level. Teachers are particularly good at developing pupils' confidence by layering the challenges provided in lessons. They do this by developing a theme, initially through whole class teaching, and then through work in groups or with a partner. However, opportunities to develop pupils' skills as independent learners are sometimes missed. Work to develop cross-curricular links is on-going, with a strong focus being placed on ensuring that the skills to be developed in each of the linked subjects are very clearly identified as part of the planning process.

The local authority statement of action for the school has been evaluated by Ofsted and judged as fulfilling requirements. Since the last inspection satisfactory support has been provided. The school's improvement partner is working closely with the school to help ensure further improvements, particularly in teaching and learning. Specialist advisers have been used to support improvement.

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

Mike Thompson

Additional Inspector