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Miss L Munton
The Headteacher
Shirehampton Primary School
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Dear Miss Munton

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 May 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit. I would be grateful if you could pass on my thanks to the pupils who spoke to me informally and to the staff and chair of governors who met with me.

There have been no significant changes to the context of the school since the last inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 23-24 September 2009, the school was asked to improve pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 to raise standards in English and mathematics by Year 6; develop pupils' understanding and awareness of diversity; and to strengthen the effectiveness of middle leaders in monitoring pupils' outcomes and leading improvements.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Since the last inspection national results for 2009 have been published. These showed a very slight improvement in overall standards, due to better results in science and a slight improvement in the overall progress made by this group of pupils between Years 3 and 6. Nevertheless, these pupils made inadequate progress in English and mathematics and standards remained too low.

This year teachers' assessments point to a clear improvement in attainment at Year 6, in both English and mathematics. The proportion reaching the nationally expected level has increased by around 10% and there has been a marked increase at the

higher Level 5. For example, whereas no pupils attained Level 5 in writing in 2009, a third have done so this year.

Since the last inspection good progress has been made in using assessments to identify how much progress individual pupils make. Teachers are far more involved in entering and interrogating data and there is now stringent attention to tracking every pupil's achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers are very clear that their pupils' progress is down to the extent to which they assess ongoing learning and provide any necessary extra support and intervention. This has successfully raised achievement. Teachers are held to account through performance management and through very regular meetings with the headteacher. There are now few inconsistencies remaining and there is no doubt that standards are improving across Key Stage 2. Consequently, the legacy of underachievement is being effectively addressed. The headteacher has high expectations and demonstrates strong leadership in her drive to raise standards. The number of pupils whose end-of-year target levels have been raised, sometimes more than once, is just one example of the shared determination to ensure pupils reach their potential.

Through joint lesson observations teachers were seen developing pupils' speaking and writing skills effectively. For example, in one lesson pupils participated in a role play in threes to generate ideas for writing a newspaper article. A follow-up task was quickly modelled by the teacher, which resulted in pupils getting down to the group task immediately. In another lesson on persuasive language, when pupils had to generate questions, the teacher modelled back correctly formed questions when pupils wrongly came up with statements. Teachers' use of discussions remains rather variable and opportunities to draw upon a range of questioning techniques to promote learning, thinking and oral language are sometimes missed. Writing is developing well through other subjects and topics. Targets are being used to better effect than at the time of the last inspection. The school's policy for marking, whereby pupils are given feedback on their strengths as well as areas for improvement, has developed further and become more consistent. There is also more evidence of pupils taking responsibility for evaluating their own progress towards their targets. Pupils know they have targets for writing and mathematics but some are still unsure what these are and how they can be of help to them. There is also a sense of pupils becoming 'tired' with their targets, which last for a whole term, and a perception that, as time goes on, these become less helpful.

The school has developed its provision to extend pupils' awareness and understanding of different cultures. There is a range of evidence from displays throughout the school that this dimension is a more prominent feature of the curriculum. The world map, entitled 'our worldwide links' is a good example, which builds upon the links associated with adults and pupils in the school community. Visitors have come into school to demonstrate Bhangra dance and others have shared their family's traditions at Chinese New Year. Pupils report they have enjoyed these opportunities. The teachers who have responsibility for promoting learning about cultural diversity have laid appropriate foundations for a more coordinated and

coherent approach to developing this aspect of pupils' personal development from the next academic year.

The school has made good progress in developing the role and impact of its middle leaders, which are considerably stronger than at the time of the last inspection. A good range of systems is now in place for monitoring the school's provision and its impact upon pupils' outcomes. Subject leaders for English and mathematics carry out effective scrutiny of teachers' planning and of pupils' work. The coordinator for special educational needs and/or disabilities has analysed the impact of an additional mathematics programme for this group to check how well these pupils have moved on in their learning. Middle leaders talk knowledgeably about their areas and where initiatives have had an impact on pupils' progress and openly and frankly about where there has been slower development.

The school has updated the single central record for safeguarding checks to ensure that it is fully up to date and in line with the latest guidance.

The local authority's statement of action was evaluated by Her Majesty's Inspectors soon after the school was given a notice to improve. It was found to fall short of the requirements in one respect. A revised plan has been drawn up that is fit for purpose. The quality of support from the local authority has been satisfactory. The local authority has arranged for a National Leader in Education to provide any necessary support for the headteacher and governors. It has carried out appropriate monitoring to hold the school to account and to ensure it makes the necessary improvement in line with its action plan. It also conducted a major review of the school's progress in February. This is comprehensive, focused and helpful, particularly to governors and senior and middle leaders, in holding the school to account. The review recognises where progress has been made and where inconsistencies remain, and it identifies clearly where further refinements and improvements are required.

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

Margaret Dickinson
Her Majesty's Inspector