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Mrs Michelle Joyce
Headteacher
Button Lane Primary School
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Dear Mrs Joyce

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 07 July 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Particular thanks go to the pupils, governors, staff and representatives of the local authority who met or spoke with me.

Since the last inspection the governing body has appointed three new members and is now complete. Governors have established a strategic monitoring committee which takes a lead responsibility for holding the school's leaders to account for the school's performance and progress. In collaboration with the local authority, an action plan is in place to steer the school's improvement. The local authority has provided support through consultants and a range of advisers.

As a result of the inspection on 19 and 20 November 2009, the school was asked to do the following.

- Raise attainment and achievement in Key Stage 2 in science and especially mathematics by:
 - making teaching more challenging in these subjects
 - matching tasks more closely to the needs and abilities of different groups of pupils
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills to practical problem solving
 - providing more opportunities for all pupils to take part in practical science activities and experiments.



- Improve pupils' preparation for the future stages of their education by:
 - improving attendance
 - making sure that all pupils make at least satisfactory progress in mathematics and science.

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 pupils' achievement.

The school's senior leaders have improved the rigour of monitoring by effectively developing the roles of middle leaders so that regular scrutiny is made of the quality of teaching and learning and the rate of progress being made by pupils. Assisted by consultants from the local authority, senior leaders undertake joint observations of lessons to strengthen the accuracy of monitoring. The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has put into place systematic scrutiny of pupils' work, regular evaluations of curriculum provision, pupils' progress meetings and detailed analysis of pupils' attainment and achievement. As a result of regular reports from these activities, the governors are better informed about the school's performance and, through the strategic monitoring committee, are more effective in holding the school to account.

Due to the significant improvements in the quality of monitoring, the school's leaders are more able to identify quickly areas to improve. For example, the outcomes of lesson observations have been used well to prioritise staff's development and training. In turn, this has resulted in good progress towards improving the quality of teaching and learning. Teaching is more challenging for pupils because teachers provide many more opportunities for pupils to engage in practical activities. Pupils say they enjoy these lessons more and that they have fun learning this way. In lessons seen during this monitoring visit pupils learnt how to use their basic skills of literacy and numeracy to solve problems from real-life situations. For example, in a Year 6 class pupils used local advertisements of houses for sale and bank interest rates to calculate how much would be saved by fixed percentage reductions in prices. The lessons observed by the inspector confirm the school's own monitoring evidence that the amount of progress made by pupils in lessons is much improved. The progress being made is not completely consistent across all classes. In some lessons the planning for pupils' learning is too broad and lacks the precision needed to ensure that pupils can maximise the opportunities provided in the more practical activities which the school now provides. Consequently, the match of tasks to the needs of pupils, while improving, continues to leave some pupils under-stretched at times. Occasionally, teachers try to pack too much into a lesson and this can become confusing for pupils.

Data provided by the school, the provisional results of Year 6 national tests in 2010 and the local authority's moderated Year 2 and Early Years Foundation Stage profile results all indicate good improvements in pupils' attainment and show good progress made by the school in improving the rates of learning and progress made by pupils.



The school has successfully developed a very wide range of incentives to encourage pupils to achieve good attendance. Pupils say that they appreciate the merits, stickers and prizes which reward low absence. Monitoring procedures are much improved, including a weekly analysis of every pupil's attendance and the engagement of an external consultant who makes home visits and strengthens the leaders' capacity to monitor and intervene where appropriate. Good attendance is celebrated in assemblies and on wall displays and pupils are proud of their class efforts when they achieve a full week. As a result, the percentage of persistent absentees has fallen significantly and the overall rate of attendance has improved. There is more to be achieved but a good start has been made.

The local authority provides good support to the school. The action plan has been reviewed since its first submission and is fit for purpose, providing a clear steer to the school's improvement. Consultants provide effective training and advice to the school's leaders and this is welcomed and well received by its staff. The result is an effective impact on improving the quality of teaching, the rate of pupils' progress and the percentage of attendance.

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

John Coleman
Her Majesty's Inspector

