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Mr E Symonds
West Kidlington Primary School
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Dear Mr Symonds

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 April and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please pass on my particular thanks to your pupils who were extremely friendly, polite and helpful.

Since the last inspection the substantive headteacher has returned from a period of secondment. The acting headteacher, who led the school at the time of the inspection, remains in post as a consultant headteacher on a part-time basis. One of the two assistant headteachers left the school at the end of the autumn term.

As a result of the inspection on 8 and 9 December 2009, the school was asked to:

- ensure, as a matter of urgency, that the school complies fully with current government requirements for safeguarding
- improve teaching and learning so that more pupils make consistently good progress, particularly in writing and science.
- improve the capacity of leaders at all levels to drive improvement.

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 care and welfare of children remain of central importance to everybody at the school. As a result, pupils continue to feel extremely safe and have every confidence in the adults around them. The successful development of pupils' personal qualities is at the heart of the school's work and is underpinned by its renowned values curriculum, which as one pupil put it, 'helps us with life'. Governors and senior



leaders have given urgent attention to the safeguarding issues identified at the last inspection. Consequently, the arrangements for the safeguarding of children are now robust and fully meet current government requirements. Governors are taking a prominent role in ensuring that everything is in place and reviewed regularly. Behaviour is very good in the school and instances of bullying are rare but the school does not have a central record of the few problems that do occur.

Writing has been a major focus over the past two terms, with an emphasis on raising its profile through more creative and innovative approaches, such as the long term collaboration with a story teller. This has generated renewed enthusiasm for writing and provided more opportunities for pupils to write in different contexts. Pupils in Year 6, for example, were developing their understanding of imperative verbs through imaginative ideas on 'How to trap a Troll!' In Year 5, pupils were engaged in lively role play related to the opening of Pandora's Box as a precursor to writing. The school's data show that pupils' progress in writing is improving as a result of these initiatives, with a higher proportion making good progress in all classes than was the case a few months ago. There is still a way to go, however, as more pupils continue to make better progress in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2.

Pupils cooperate very well, for instance when exchanging ideas with their 'talk partners'. They also collaborate very effectively in groups, for example, when Year 4 pupils were involved in exploring the various properties of solids and liquids in a science lesson. Good questioning and support from the teacher and teaching assistants helped these pupils develop their investigative skills well. However, this approach is not yet consistent throughout the school in science. The subject will be a focus this term when the knowledgeable and enthusiastic science leader will have the opportunity to develop approaches to scientific enquiry and to establish new tracking systems for the subject.

New assessment systems are now much more firmly embedded. Throughout the school pupils are aware of their current levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy and what they need to do to reach the next level. As one Year 6 pupil put it, 'We can see for ourselves how we can improve.' Pupils also welcome the increasing amount of peer assessment as they recognise the value of bringing a fresh pair of eyes to evaluate their work. The relatively new blue (for brilliant) and pink (for think) assessment system is well established and helps pupils see what they need to improve. The layered 'must, should and could' targets are also helping pupils to challenge themselves to do even better, although some older pupils say that they find the technical language of some of their literacy targets difficult to understand.

The two headteachers work together well, although their respective roles and related targets have not yet been clearly defined by governors. This is required to bring greater clarity to all. Leaders at all levels are developing their understanding of using data to evaluate pupils' progress which, in turn, is helping them to address any potential underachievement at an earlier stage. Similarly, governors are becoming much more involved in holding leaders to account for the school's performance as



well as supporting them. As a result, leaders and governors now have a realistic and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, indicative of an improving capacity to continue improving.

The statement of action provided by the local authority was judged to fully meet requirements. The local authority continues to provide good support through the School Improvement Partner and the appointment of an associate headteacher whose work in developing the skills of middle leaders is already paying dividends.

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

Graham Lee
Additional inspector

