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Mr Stephen Oldfield
Headteacher
St John's Stonefold C of E Primary School
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Dear Mr Oldfield

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

Since the last inspection one part-time teacher has left the school. A new appointment has been made to this post with effect from 1 September 2010. Significant teaching staff absence was experienced by one class during the spring term. The school caretaker is long-term absent and his post is currently covered by a temporary part-time replacement. The governing body has appointed three new members. They have established a new school effectiveness committee to manage the school's programme for improvement. The local authority provides additional advice and consultancy to support the school's improvement.

As a result of the inspection on 7–8 December 2009, the school was asked to

- Raise standards and achievement particularly for the most able pupils and the older Key Stage 1 and younger Key Stage 2 pupils, by:
 - improving the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems so that underperformance is identified and tackled quickly and effectively.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is of a consistently good standard, by:
 - rigorously using assessment information to plan work which matches pupils' interests, needs and abilities, especially of the more able



- ensuring pupils are aware of their individual targets so that they know how well they are doing and understand their next steps in learning
- improving the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems so that teaching is improved.

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.

In collaboration with the local authority, an improvement plan has been established which suitably targets the key areas identified at the last inspection. Governors monitor the school's progress towards these targets and minutes of meetings held by governors show evidence of much improved challenge and a clear determination to hold school leaders to account for the progress being made. Governors now receive reports from curriculum leaders, but this is at a very early stage of being embedded. Their curriculum monitoring roles and responsibilities are newly established. Information is received by governors from the results of monitoring by the local authority and by the headteacher. The systems for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's work are improved. These systems are relatively embryonic and some lack regularity and consistency. For example, observations of the quality of teaching are made but the results of this are not systematically collated or matched against the governors' targets for the proportion of good or better lessons. Good data analysis is made from the outcomes of assessments of pupils' attainment. This provides a summary analysis of pupils' progress over the year but does not break it down to show more precise measures since the last inspection. This makes it difficult for governors to evaluate the progress the school is making towards the targets set for these.

Pupils' attainment is rising steadily as shown by the results of the school's assessments and provisional results for national tests. The rate of progress is variable but improving slightly. Over time, pupils in Key Stage 2 are showing signs of improving progress including the most able. Within the year groups and during the current academic year, their progress has accelerated a little, but this is inconsistent between classes and across subjects. The intervention programmes provided by the school for pupils in danger of underachieving are effective and ensure that they make much better progress. These groups benefit from precise expectations about what pupils should learn. They receive tightly structured programmes of work with clear identification of pupils' learning.

Overall, pupils are making better progress due to improvements to the overall quality of teaching and learning. There remain significant variations. All teachers plan conscientiously, but the format of planning is different across the classes. Teachers plan objectives for pupils to attain but many are too broad and focus on the activities pupils will do rather than the learning which should occur as a result. Consequently, in some lessons observed, the pace and expectations of what pupils



should learn in a given time are too little. For example, in the weaker lessons seen, teachers give overlong explanations which take far too much lesson time. Teachers organise their classes into ability groups and the pupils are fully aware of this. They say that this helps them to work better together. Most pupils know their targets for learning and say that they are reviewed at various points during the year; this is significantly improved since the last inspection. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is completed and praises pupils' achievements with stickers and comments. However, marking is often insufficiently related to pupils' targets and does not help pupils enough to understand how to improve their work. The training and development of staff have improved and ensure that lessons are structured around a three-part process. There is a policy in place which identifies the features of good teaching and effective learning. The monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the training do not focus sufficiently on these elements and opportunities are not taken to reinforce and strengthen teaching in a regular and systematic way.

Support for the school from the local authority is good. A clear plan put in place following the last inspection is fit for purpose and sets out the range of consultancy and advice to be offered. The school has welcomed this external support and teaching has improved as a result of the staff training provided by the local authority.

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

