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6 May 2010

Mr M Higgs
The Headteacher
Pensans Primary School
Madron Road
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Dear Mr Higgs

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 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to staff and governors who helped with my visit.

There have been no significant changes in the context of the school since the inspection on 11 and 12 November 2009, as a result of which the school was asked to:

- meet the statutory requirements for vetting staff
- raise pupils' attainment in English and mathematics so that more reach or exceed the levels expected
- use assessment, target setting and marking to help pupils improve their work
- ensure leaders, managers and governors check on the effectiveness of the school's work in keeping pupils safe and secure high quality teaching, learning and curriculum provision so that pupils achieve as well as they can.

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.

The school's analysis of pupils' progress shows that pupils' attainment has risen in English and mathematics, and more pupils are reaching the higher levels than previously. This is especially notable among current pupils in Year 6, and was confirmed in the observation of lessons and the scrutiny of pupils' work. In part, these improvements result from more rigorous use of assessment and tracking of pupils' progress, so that any weaknesses are identified and tackled, for example by offering one-to-one tuition to the pupil. Pupils assess their own and each other's work, and have a good understanding of their targets and how to use them to



improve. Progress on achieving targets is monitored by teachers, but they do not always ensure that the pupil's understanding is fully secure before 'signing off' the target as having been achieved. Marking of work has also improved and usually shows the pupil how it might be made even better. More precise monitoring of the quality of teaching by school leaders and local authority staff has correctly identified pockets of weakness which are now being tackled. Lessons observed showed that these strategies are succeeding.

Requirements to keep children safe are now met in full. Records are up-to-date and comprehensive. In their action plan, the governors rightly aspire to achieve excellence in this field, and some exemplary practice is emerging. For example, all adults wear an identity badge which shows, by use of simple pictograms, their areas of expertise in keeping children safe, such as in first aid or counselling. The level of staff training in child protection is well above the minimum required, due in part to the fact that a member of staff is a qualified trainer in the field. The inspector observed the high priority given to child protection at first hand, for example in the effective way the receipt of an inappropriate text message by a pupil was followed up.

As a result of these actions it is clear that children and pupils feel very safe in school, for example in the exciting and well-organised environment of the Early Years Foundation Stage where children confidently choose activities and seek adult help when they need it. Surveys conducted by the school confirm the pupils' high level of confidence in their own safety in school.

Reorganisation of the working practices of the governors and training by local authority staff has led to a much improved focus on meeting key responsibilities and challenging the school to improve. The effectiveness of new strategies is regularly monitored, and adjustments are made to bring about further improvements, for example in the procedures for appointing new staff.

The local authority's statement of action following the school's receipt of a notice to improve fulfilled Ofsted's requirements. Support and monitoring have been of good quality and the governors in particular have appreciated the training they have received. The School Improvement Partner has also provided good quality support to the governors and headteacher. In record keeping, support has placed a little too much emphasis on meeting minimum requirements, rather than encouraging the school to adopt agreed best practice.

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

Paul Sadler
Additional Inspector

