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Mrs I Smith
Liberty Primary School
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Dear Mrs Smith

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 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, parents, governors and colleagues from the local authority, who contributed.

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

- improve achievement throughout the school, particularly in English in Key Stage 2
- ensure that all teaching is at least satisfactory and the large majority is good or better
- improve pupils' attendance by working with families and external agencies.

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 headteacher has set out a clear direction for improving the school's performance and, in collaboration with key personnel, has taken some decisive actions in order to secure improvement. The school has revised and developed its system for tracking progress, enabling staff to analyse progress and tackle areas of underachievement more swiftly. Careful analysis supports the identification of pupils who could do better and suitable arrangements are now being made to support them to do so. New coordinators for each key stage, for inclusion and for literacy and numeracy, have been appointed. Those who have taken up their posts this school year have a clear understanding of their role and have already contributed to positive changes.

Staff and pupils understand that the focus is now very strongly on learning and progress and on raising attainment. Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 speak confidently

about how many sub-levels of progress they have made and refer proudly to the 'target rockets' which are on display in every classroom. 'I love learning', stated one pupil. Pupil questionnaires offer them 'three stars and a wish' about their work, asking what has helped them to improve in literacy and numeracy and whether they have 'gone up one or more sub-levels this year'. An end-of-year assembly finished with all pupils contributing an overview of the progress they had made over the year with one triumphant pupil contributing, 'Six sub-levels!' The increased emphasis on English and literacy is evident around the school. Correct use of punctuation and grammar is exemplified by carefully chosen examples of pupils' work which are on display in the common areas. Pupils show they understand and can use correct terminology. Older pupils appreciated being involved in the whole-school project of levelling and re-banding reading books so that progress in reading can be more clearly guided and supported.

The information held by the school on progress and attainment this year shows an encouraging improvement from 2009. This improvement is most marked in English at Key Stage 2 where the percentage reaching at least expected levels increased from 64% to 82%; the percentage of pupils who exceeded nationally expected levels rose from 9% to 38%. The school is aware that there is more work to be done to ensure that this improvement is consolidated and matched across all areas of the curriculum.

School leaders have addressed with vigour the monitoring of teaching and learning. In this they have been helped by advanced skills teachers and consultants from the local authority. A few parents or carers who were spoken to during the monitoring visit expressed concern about the staff changes and absences which have occurred over the year. The headteacher and other leaders are aware of this but are resolute in their commitment to raising the quality of teaching in order to improve opportunities for pupils to make as much progress as they can. Improved and consistent lesson planning, which makes it clear what pupils will be learning and takes into account their different levels of working, supports teachers in delivering lessons that are well pitched and well paced. Reorganisation is planned for the Early Years Foundation Stage because the school recognises that the focus on achievement in the rest of the school now needs to be carried over with increased rigour into this area.

The school has introduced clear and increasingly effective expectations about timekeeping and attendance for pupils, as well as their parents and carers. At the end of playtimes staff create a real sense of urgency about getting to class on time and there is an expectation that once in class pupils will remain there. Strategies to improve attendance and timekeeping at the beginning of the day include locking the gates to the main playground once school has started so that careful note can be taken of any latecomers. Absence is picked up on the first day and, where necessary, other key agencies are involved. Again, the school is aware that not all parents and carers have welcomed the change in approach but can point to good examples of where actions taken have improved attendance significantly.

The school has made full use of all the opportunities open to it to support improvement. Assessment, analysis and aspiration have become the norm and a strong foundation for further improvement has been laid. Governors are now clearer about their role and are effectively involved in school self-assessment. They understand that they can be more demanding of information but are still reliant, to some extent, upon guidance from the headteacher or the local authority as to what this should be.

The local authority clearly has a grasp of the key areas for improvement and has worked well with the school to achieve the points and actions included in its well-defined action plan. The school improvement partner provides a very good balance of support and challenge.

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

Anne Duffy
Her Majesty's Inspector