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Thursday 10 June 2010

Mr Colin Mutton
Kingstone and Thruxton Primary School
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Dear Mr Mutton

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave me when I inspected your school on Wednesday 9 June 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please convey my thanks to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body for their valuable contribution to discussions. I am also grateful to the pupils for their helpful comments and willingness to talk to me.

There have been no staffing changes since the last inspection but a few pupils have joined the school and some have left. The current number on roll is 160.

As a result of the inspection on 13 October 2009, the school was asked to address the following issues:

- Improve standards, especially in English, by ensuring that a clear improvement plan is in place by December 2009; teaching is challenging; pupils have frequent opportunities to write; and the curriculum meets their needs, particularly for boys. The school was also asked to make sure that assessment is consistent and accurate, and that staff training is focused on raising achievement, with improvement strategies being evaluated in relation to pupils' learning.
- Develop the roles of the governors so that they hold the school to account for tackling weaknesses.

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 school has devised a suitable improvement plan to accelerate progress in English which has a clear focus on raising standards. It is being implemented satisfactorily across the school to help improve pupils' basic literacy skills. This is helping to improve standards, although attainment in writing is still low by the end



of Key Stage 2. Pupils have gaps in their knowledge and skills, and some of the more able pupils are still not achieving as well as they might; for example, handwriting and spelling are weak across the school, as shown in a scrutiny of their workbooks. Nevertheless, greater opportunities for writing are benefiting pupils because they are actively encouraged to edit and re-draft their work in English lessons and record their findings across other subjects, such as in science and geography. Because the curriculum has been improved satisfactorily, boys are now given suitable work that appeals to them so that it matches their needs and interests. For instance, they enjoy discussing football in Year 6 and the Rainforest in Year 3. In the lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory overall, and sometimes good. Learning objectives are usually made clear to pupils and there are ample opportunities for them to use their literacy skills. Work is reasonably challenging for the middle- and lower-attaining groups, and teachers encourage them to do their best. However, lesson planning is sometimes not sufficiently fine-tuned because it does not always identify how tasks will be matched to pupils of differing abilities. This leads to a lack of challenge for the most able pupils. Assessment is being used to greater effect to help teachers pinpoint pupils' progress and all pupils have good, clear targets which they know well. Teachers' marking makes good use of praise to motivate pupils, but it does not consistently identify what pupils need to do to get to improve their work.

Staff training has been focused well on increasing teachers' skills in the teaching of English and on raising pupil achievement. The deputy headteacher has taken a significant lead in driving up standards through better analysis of data and a closer scrutiny of pupils' progress. She has a strong sense of ambition and determination, and a good handle on monitoring the impact of improvement strategies on pupils' learning. The headteacher supports and guides staff appropriately so that all are focused clearly on improving pupils' progress.

The strategic role of the Governing Body is being developed satisfactorily through appropriate training which focuses on increasing their skills in holding the school to account and on building up their knowledge of how to interpret data. Increased links with subject leaders and regular visits to classes are helping governors to monitor the work of the school more effectively. However, the whole school development plan is not sufficiently detailed to ensure that governors and senior managers can keep a check on how well the school is doing and where it needs to focus next. The plan lacks precision and does not include measurable outcomes or details of how success will be evaluated or by whom. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body are keen for governors to be more proactive in the school and to improve the school development plan so that it is as a more useful management tool. This bodes well for the future.

The local authority's statement of action was evaluated by Ofsted and judged to require amendments. It has now been updated satisfactorily to include suitable references to the inclusion of plans with specific actions, quantifiable targets, lead persons and milestones, as well as clear strategies to strengthen leadership and



management. Satisfactory support has been provided to the school since the last inspection. The school improvement partner, the local authority inspector and specialist consultants have worked closely with staff to help them improve teaching, particularly in English. Regular project team meetings and greater governor involvement have helped the school to monitor its progress satisfactorily over the last two terms with the aid of 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

Anna Coyle

Dr Anna Coyle
Additional Inspector

