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Ms J Beaumont
Thorpe Acre Junior School
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Dear Ms Beaumont

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 Wednesday 15 September 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit.

Three of the six class teachers left the school at the end of the summer term and three new teachers started in September 2010. The school continues to have a high proportion of pupils who join or leave the school during the year.

As a result of the inspection on 19 January 2010 the school was asked to raise attainment in the key subjects, improve the quality and consistency of teaching, and improve the care, guidance and support for pupils who find it difficult to manage their behaviour in school.

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 pupils' achievement.

Senior staff have worked hard to improve the quality and consistency of teaching since the last inspection. Teachers have received training in the use of assessment, setting pupil targets and problem-solving activities in mathematics. Teaching assistants were trained in the effective delivery of group reading sessions. By the end of the summer term 2010, the headteacher's monitoring of teaching, supported by local authority reviews, identified improvements for the majority of staff but not for all. Lesson observations this term, including those conducted during this inspection, indicate that all teaching is now at least satisfactory and an increasing proportion is good. There are now consistent approaches to the use of learning objectives and pupils' targets. Teachers match tasks to pupils' differing needs and involve them in assessing their work. Teachers' marking and comments are thorough and offer advice for improvement. However, in the lessons observed, pupils'



progress ranged from good to satisfactory. Many pupils still have gaps in their knowledge and understanding which hold them back when applying their skills.

The climate for learning has improved since the inspection and it is supported effectively by useful classroom displays which reinforce pupils' targets and key learning points. In the lessons observed, pupils showed positive attitudes to learning. They were enthusiastic and readily volunteered to answer teachers' questions. They worked well together and showed maturity in moving around the classroom. This is the result of the school's effective action to improve teaching and of the good relationships established with pupils by teachers.

A quarter of the Year 6 pupils who sat Key Stage 2 tests in 2010 arrived during the school year. Overall, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in the year was well above average and two pupils joined Year 6 speaking no English. The provisional results of these tests indicate that attainment remained well below average, although with a slight improvement in the proportion achieving Level 5 in English. This was below the challenging targets which the school had set. The majority of pupils made the progress expected from their starting points, which were below average. Girls generally made better progress than boys.

The school's assessment information for other year groups indicates that attainment is below that expected for pupils' ages. However, the attainment of pupils in Years 3 and 4 is closer to the average and shows an improving trend. These pupils are making expected or, in some cases, above expected progress. Staff have analysed performance carefully using the detailed assessments available to them. They have identified relevant key priorities for the current school year in developing reading and applying mathematical skills to solve problems. Pupils now benefit from regular activities to support their learning in these areas. The system for setting class and individual targets in key subjects is now well established and pupils know their targets and what they need to improve in their work.

Senior staff acted promptly following the inspection in January to improve the behaviour of pupils. Specific strategies include meeting some pupils on arrival at school and helping them to develop a positive attitude for the rest of the day. Close contact is maintained with parents or carers, and external support is engaged where appropriate. The school has revised its behaviour policy and ensures that the system of rewards and warnings is consistently applied. Pupils understand and value the system. They report that behaviour has improved since last year.

The local authority's statement of action has been revised and now provides an appropriate range of support, challenging targets and delineation of responsibilities for monitoring and evaluating performance. Local authority staff have provided effective support and training which has assisted the school's progress on the main issues identified in its inspection. This has enabled staff with responsibility for the key subjects to develop their leadership roles. It has also helped to promote consistent approaches to planning learning, teaching and assessment.



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

Martin Cragg
Her Majesty's Inspector

