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Mrs Sue Peel
The Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Peel

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 28 January 2009 with my colleague Mary Hinds, Additional Inspector. We were grateful for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during our visit. Please pass our thanks to the coordinators, subject leaders and governors with whom we met and staff and pupils who talked with us during the day.

Since the last inspection, one teacher has left the school and two newly qualified teachers have been appointed. Due to increased pupil numbers in Key Stage 2, an additional class was formed from September 2008. In addition, Key Stage 2 has been re-organised into two distinct teams containing three Year 3 and 4 classes and three Year 5 and 6 classes. An additional Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA), who is a mathematics specialist, has been appointed and has worked in Key Stage 2 classes since the beginning of the academic year. The governing body is now operating at full capacity because vacancies have been filled.

As a result of the inspection on 30 June and 1 July 2008, the school was asked to:

- accelerate achievement in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 2, paying particular attention to the achievement of more able pupils
- improve the quality of teaching in Key Stage 2, ensuring that lessons have sufficient pace, activities are well matched to pupils' needs and there are enough opportunities for pupils to work independently
- ensure that the curriculum for Key Stage 2 builds on what pupils have already learned and is sufficiently challenging
- improve the rigour of the monitoring of teaching and learning, including using data more effectively to track pupils' progress and hold teachers to account.



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 2008, standards at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics remained high and above the national average. Unvalidated Key Stage 2 results show that standards were lower in English, mathematics and science compared with the previous year. They were close to the national average in English and science but below in mathematics. This was because fewer pupils achieved at the higher levels, particularly in English and mathematics. In addition, too many pupils made insufficient progress, particularly in mathematics. The school's own assessment data from the autumn term shows that standards are beginning to improve. The standards of most pupils are broadly average and most pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress. There are still significant gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts and skills and these limit their progress. For some this also affects their confidence, especially when working independently.

The quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 has improved since the last inspection. It is at least satisfactory, with an increasing proportion that is good. Some elements of outstanding teaching are emerging. The better teaching has clear lesson objectives, good pace, high expectations, and well structured activities which match pupils' needs. Teaching assistants support individuals and small groups effectively. Where the teaching is less effective, there is insufficient challenge for different groups of pupils, particularly the high attaining. Some teachers talk for too long which prevents pupils from getting on with their activities. Occasionally, the pace is too rapid which leaves pupils confused and unclear about what exactly they are required to do. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good.

Significant improvement has been made in recording assessments of pupils' work, analysing pupils' strengths and weaknesses, and tracking their progress. However, many are at the early stage of implementation and require more time to embed fully and consistently across the school. Improved planning frameworks and a new whole school assessment system are being implemented. Regular meetings to assess pupils' progress are beginning to hold staff to account for the rates of progress for pupils in each class. However, some pupils are not performing as well as expected and have not been identified or targeted quickly enough. This is acknowledged by senior leaders who are beginning to rectify this. Teaching assistants are providing very structured and focused intervention work, particularly in mathematics, which is beginning to raise standards. Increasing opportunities are being provided for pupils to assess their own work. This is increasing involvement in their learning and is giving them a better understanding of how well they are doing. Learning targets are used consistently and help pupils know what they are focusing on in lessons. Marking, although carried out regularly, does not always give pupils sufficient guidance about what they need to do next to improve.

There is appropriate curriculum coverage in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Pupils are developing their enquiry and investigative skills,

especially in science. Connections are increasingly being made between different subjects, although natural opportunities are sometimes missed. Curriculum coverage in subjects such as history and religious education is variable. Some themes are taught in greater depth in some classes in the same year groups than others. The use of frameworks or worksheets sometimes prevents some pupils from developing their extended writing skills. Presentation is generally neat, although occasionally some pupils present their work untidily.

There is a strong and united commitment to improving achievement and standards throughout the school. The senior leadership team has been reorganised and is sharply focused on improvement. Senior managers, subject leaders and governors are fully engaged in a range of monitoring and evaluation strategies including learning walks, book and planning scrutinies, and classroom observation. Outcomes of this monitoring are being used appropriately to target further improvement. Governors, with the support of the local authority, are now much more knowledgeable about the school and are well placed to hold it to account for its work.

The statement of action produced by the local authority following the last inspection generally met requirements. The revised plan explicitly identifies that support was neither offered nor requested by the school. In addition, the local authority was unaware of any problems in the school prior to the inspection. Since the inspection, the level of support and guidance provided by the local authority has been good and in line with that identified in the post inspection action plan. A new School Improvement Partner is working closely with the school and is providing greater challenge to senior leaders. Participation in the Improving Schools Programme has provided suitable guidance, support and training for teaching assistants, subject leaders and governors. This has resulted in improved skills of staff, growing confidence, and a better understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement.

All the necessary employment checks are carried out and all staff, including supply teachers, are appropriately vetted to confirm their suitability to work with children. The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils meet government requirements overall. However, some newly appointed staff have not received appropriate child protection training although they have been provided with procedural guidance.

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 Weston
Her Majesty's Inspector