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21 February 2008

Mr J McMillan
The Headteacher
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Pickersleigh Road
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WR14 2BY

Dear Mr McMillan

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 6 February 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I am grateful for the contributions of your local authority link adviser and the representative of the governing body.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection on 15 and 16 May 2007, the school was asked to: ensure that all pupils make the progress they should and reach standards of which they are capable; raise teachers' expectations of pupils' capabilities and increase teachers' accountability for pupils' learning; provide pupils with clear guidance on how they can improve their work; and, work closely with parents to improve attendance.

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.

Your leadership continues to drive improvement successfully. You are doing this by ensuring that the impact of all that the school provides is carefully measured by its effect on pupils' progress. Succinct evaluations of the school's effectiveness in all areas are shared openly with staff and governors, so that all know where improvements are needed. There is, then, now full accountability for performance throughout the school, and any serious shortcomings in the performance of staff are swiftly addressed. The large turnover of staff since the last inspection has been managed well. Staff are now working much more effectively in teams to share good practice and, for the first time, are moderating pupils' work together so that all are developing consistently high expectations of the standards pupils should be reaching.

The local authority has been rigorous and effective in identifying ways to improve teaching and learning. It has made a good contribution to the raising of teaching quality by helping staff to identify ways in which they can help all children move forward in their learning. Provision in the nursery has strengthened markedly now that staff are more aware of the how to help children learn from their activities. Throughout the school, there is now better planning of work in class which meets the specific needs of pupils with learning difficulties. However, there remains some inconsistency in the quality of such planning between classes.

Literacy standards continue to improve, partly as a result of a strong focus on developing reading skills and a celebration across the school of good writing. Results in Year 6 English tests in 2007 were broadly average, and reflect some good progress given pupils' weaknesses in communication, language and literacy on joining the school. Standards in mathematics, however, are low in the current Years 5 and 6. School data suggests that this is because of very weak progress made by many pupils when they were in Years 3 and 4. Despite additional help put in place to support their learning, a significant minority of these pupils lack confidence in basic mathematical techniques and routines and are not reaching the standards they should. The teaching of mathematics through the school has, however, improved and is now securing at least satisfactory progress for most pupils in lessons. Opportunities are taken, for example in exercises at the start of the school day, to allow pupils to practise their number skills, but there are not sufficient planned opportunities to help pupils apply such skills to solving problems in their mathematics lessons or in other subjects.

Pupils now receive good feedback on the quality of each piece of work through clear and regular marking by their teachers. This indicates how the pupils' work met the objectives of the exercise, and where it could have been better. However, guidance to pupils on how they can raise their overall standards in literacy and numeracy is less clear, because teachers' marking and other feedback make insufficient reference to how successful pupils are in meeting their individual targets for improvement.

School attendance figures remain stubbornly well below average. This is despite the strong efforts the school has made to raise the profile of good attendance through information to parents and rewards to pupils, and through buying in additional support from the education welfare service to work with parents whose children are poor attenders. The absences the school is prepared to authorise remain very high, and this appears inconsistent with other actions the school is taking to register disapproval of irregular attendance. Winning the battle over poor attendance is clearly vital in a school where the underachievers are often found among those with the worst attendance records.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson
Additional Inspector