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Ms C Williamson
Headteacher
Mere School
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BA12 6EW

Dear Ms Williamson

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Mere School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 3 February 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the staff, pupils and governors who took the time to talk to me.

The specialist learning centre based at the school will close in July 2011, and the children will be re-integrated into mainstream primary schools within the Mere and Tisbury cluster. One new parent governor has been appointed to replace one who has finished his term of office.

As a result of the inspection on 2 February 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement, which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and inadequate progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Some pupils come into the school with low language and communication and personal development skills. Assessment data for children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are currently unreliable. By the end of Year 2 pupils' attainment in 2010 was broadly average in writing, but significantly below the national average in reading and mathematics. Attainment in national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2010 was low and pupils' progress significantly below the national average. This was similar to the situation in 2009 and was largely a result of pupils



failing to make enough progress in Year 5, although good quality teaching in Year 6 made up for some of the underachievement.

Since the last inspection the school has installed an appropriate tracking system which is beginning to provide reliable information for teachers to measure pupils' progress over time. Teachers understand the data and are beginning to use the knowledge they gain more consistently in their planning. The current data show that this year pupils are making satisfactory progress. A strong focus on improving mathematics teaching this year and the positive impact of the extra support provided for teachers are already evident. Easier identification of those pupils who are underachieving has meant that one-to-one support for some pupils has been well targeted. Where it is clear that progress is slower, support has been provided for individual teachers.

In Years 5 and 6, the quality of teaching is better and so pupils' progress is faster than lower down the school. Year 6 pupils can explain clearly what level they are working at and what they need to do in order to improve. Since the last inspection all pupils have been given targets and so are clear about what to focus on, particularly in literacy lessons, and sometimes they are given the opportunity to assess their own progress. In lessons, however, pupils are not always clear what they need to do in order to make good progress, because teachers do not make the criteria for success explicit enough. In spite of the ready access to assessment information, work is not consistently and appropriately matched to pupils' needs. Marking is consistent and regular. Older pupils say that it is helpful, but not all the younger ones can read the teacher's comments. Pupils are not consistently given time to correct work and act on the advice given.

The atmosphere in the school is happy and behaviour good. Pupils say they feel very safe and they enjoy being in school. They enjoy their learning, especially the opportunities to do exciting activities outside school, and appreciate the new focus on targets and understanding what they need to do to improve.

Although the school has made some progress in the areas for development identified at the last inspection, the pace of change has been too slow to build a better capacity to improve. For example, pupils' attendance was low in 2009 and fell further in 2010 and the systems for tackling the problem are not sufficiently rigorous. The school does not have a sufficiently robust cycle of monitoring, evaluation, planning, implementation and review of the impact of actions taken. Teachers are ambitious and keen to improve, but there has not been sufficient focus through staff meetings and in-service training on developing the quality of teaching and learning in order to ensure long-term sustainable improvements in pupils' progress and attainment. Although leaders of literacy and numeracy monitor the quality of pupils' work in their subjects, they feel less confident assessing the quality of teaching. The governing body is not sufficiently challenging in holding the school to account. The current model of leadership, with nearly all responsibility falling on the headteacher, does not demonstrate a sustainable capacity to improve.



The school has made good use of regular visits from the School Improvement Partner. The local authority has helped to support the teaching of mathematics. Consultant support has been bought in to develop the Every Child Counts programme, the teaching of information and communication technology and the promotion of pupils' emotional well-being.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mary Massey

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2010

- Improve the consistency of teaching to secure good progress by:
 - matching work closely to pupils' needs and abilities so that they are challenged well throughout lessons
 - making better use of progress data in mathematics to plan challenging work that will accelerate pupils' learning at Key Stage 2.
- Ensure pupils, especially the older ones, are well informed about the levels they are expected to attain by the end of the year and the level at which they are currently working so that they know precisely what their next steps in learning are.
- Sharpen school improvement by ensuring that leaders use data more effectively to check the success of its plans to raise attainment and progress, and to identify where further improvements to learning can be secured.