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2 November 2010

Mr S Wigley
Bellefield Primary and Nursery School
Windermere Road
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Wiltshire
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Dear Mr Wigley

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Bellefield Primary and Nursery School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 19 October 2010, 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 all those staff and pupils who helped us during the visit.

Numbers in the school have risen since the two schools amalgamated two years ago. Since the last inspection two new class teachers have been appointed to replace teachers who left the school. A new class has been created, taught by two teachers who are job sharing. The literacy leader has left and a replacement appointed from within the school. From the start of the autumn term 2010, two part-time teachers have been appointed to carry out one-to-one support programmes in literacy and numeracy for pupils in Years 1 and 2. In addition, the school has a funding for one-to-one tuition for 30 more pupils, mostly in Year 6.

As a result of the inspection on 3-4 February 2009, 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 good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

At the time of the last inspection the headteacher had been in post for three weeks. He was appointed after the amalgamation of an infant and a junior school. His priority was to create a positive learning culture in the school, supported by the school's Christian ethos, with continuity of provision and experience for pupils from the nursery through to Year 6. This process has taken time but has been very successful. The atmosphere across the school is calm and cooperative. Pupils are polite, behave well and are very keen to learn. They are well cared for and there is



comprehensive provision for the school's high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and for those who are vulnerable or at the early stages of learning to speak English.

Children's levels of development on entry to the school are lower than expected, particularly their communication and language, writing and calculation skills. They make good progress in Reception and Years 1 and 2, but their attainment is still low by the time they reach the end of Year 2, particularly in mathematics. The school's comprehensive information on pupils' progress show that overall they are making good progress in every year group except the current Year 4, where it is just below average. Against the national trend, boys, particularly those in Year 3 to 6, are making more progress than girls. The improved rate of progress for Year 6 pupils in 2010 led to a much higher proportion gaining both English and mathematics at Level 4 than was the case in 2009. The school identified writing skills, especially for boys, as an area for development last year. Extensive support for teachers in how to effectively assess pupils' progress in writing had a very positive impact and results of teacher assessment in Year 6 rose substantially in 2010. The legacy of underachievement in previous years remains however, and although it is rising, attainment is still low. Across the whole school, progress is now better in reading and writing than in mathematics, where calculation skills are the weakest. The school is already tackling this through focused training for teachers.

The school's analysis of the progress of different groups of pupils is very thorough. Although the number of pupils who are at the early stages of learning to speak English is rising, they are provided with comprehensive support and make good progress in four out of the six year groups. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make less than expected progress. The school has taken very decisive action to tackle underachievement for some pupils in Years 1 and 2 through the appointment of literacy and numeracy teachers to provide one-to-one support. The reading skills of some children have improved markedly in the very short time this has been in place. Able and gifted pupils across the school are making good and in some cases outstanding progress. These data and a substantial rise in the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 in English by the time they leave the school indicate that more challenge has been provided for more able pupils, but in lessons seen during the visit, teachers were not always sufficiently ambitious for them.

Since the last inspection a marking policy has been introduced, which is well understood by pupils and staff and implemented effectively. All the books seen during the visit were marked in a consistent style, with areas for improvement identified. However, pupils do not always have the opportunity to act on the 'next steps' they have been given and the targets they are set are not always sufficiently challenging or personalised.

A limited number of lessons were seen during the visit. In all of these, good relationships between pupils and staff were evident. Pupils are engaged, enthusiastic and well motivated to learn. It is particularly pleasing to find boys enjoying extended writing, and this is supported through a themed curriculum which adds interest and



encourages wider learning. Teachers and teaching assistants provide good modelling of the skills they want pupils to develop and many show good questioning skills to extend pupils' learning. In some lessons pupils are encouraged to talk to one another about their learning, although the vocabulary they need to be able to do this is still limited. Teachers' planning, however, shows insufficient focus on the quality of pupils' learning and sometimes assessment information on their progress is not used effectively. In some lessons this leads to time being wasted because activities are not sufficiently well matched to individual pupils' needs or to the intended learning outcomes. Success criteria, so pupils know exactly what they are aiming for in the lesson and what good progress will look like, are not always explicit.

Although the quality of teaching and learning and teachers' planning are monitored regularly, the process is not sufficiently sharp or robust, with clear criteria that will support improvement. As a result the information collected does not provide an opportunity to systematically develop teachers' skills, nor is it used consistently to inform performance management, professional development or medium- or long-term improvement planning. Analysis of pupils' progress information is carried out annually but there are no regular milestones that show progress towards targets over the year, so although the school does respond promptly to individual needs as they arise, for example through pupil progress meetings, there is no overall picture of the pattern of progress over time.

Although self-evaluation is sometimes over generous, the school has accurately identified priorities for improvement and successfully tackled them. For example, outcomes for writing across the school have improved substantially as a result of professional development and external support. Achievement of more able pupils has improved. Attendance has risen to just average and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has halved. All these improvements in outcomes in 2010, and evidence that pupils' progress across the whole school is now good, demonstrate that the school has a better capacity to improve.

In 2009 the school requested support from the local authority in order to raise standards in reading and writing. Consultants worked alongside both senior leaders and teaching staff throughout the year. This had a very positive impact on writing skills across the school, and particularly on boys' attainment in writing at the end of Year 6. Support in developing literacy skills is also being provided for new staff and for those teachers who have changed year groups at the beginning of this term. The focus this year is on developing pupils' mathematical skills, including a project to help parents to support their children's learning.

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 2009

- Ensure that teachers consistently provide challenge in the work given to pupils, especially those who are more able.

- Ensure that marking and the process of setting targets help pupils understand clearly how to improve their work.

