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25 September 2007

Mrs A Healey
The Headteacher
St Bartholomew's C of E Primary School
Ann Street
Brighton
East Sussex BN1 4GP

Dear Mrs Healey

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you, your staff and the pupils gave when I inspected your school on 18 September 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit.

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 16 and 17 January 2007, the school was asked to: raise the achievement of all pupils, particularly in the Foundation Stage, by making sure that teaching provides appropriate challenge and makes the pupils think more for themselves; use assessment information more effectively to focus the learning of all groups and individuals; and, improve the attendance of persistent absentees.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The headteacher and staff, supported by the local authority (LA), are working well as a team to make learning more interesting and to increase the level of challenge for all pupils. Lesson planning is now based on appropriate expectations as to what pupils of differing abilities should be capable of. There are greater opportunities for pupils to complete extended pieces of work, encouraging them to think independently, and to apply skills, knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. Innovative work to develop 'thinking skills' takes place in some classes and is increasingly evident throughout the school. The deployment of additional adults has improved, they now make a satisfactory contribution to learning although their role in whole class teaching is not always as productive as it could be. Interactive whiteboards are used well, both to structure lessons and to engage pupils with images and sound.

As a result, the pupils are enjoying school more and achievement has improved and is now satisfactory. The most recent end of year profile for the Reception class, although lower than the previous year, shows that these children made satisfactory progress from very varied starting points; a high proportion speak English as an additional language, are newly arrived in the country, or have learning difficulties. The most recent national assessments at the end of Year 2 show good improvement for pupils of this age. Standards in reading and mathematics rose significantly, although they remain below the national average. Standards in writing rose to a lesser extent, although for the first time in four years, some pupils exceeded the nationally expected levels. Results for Year 6 pupils were up sharply on the previous year in mathematics, English and science and were in line with the national average overall. The school recognised that some more able pupils did not achieve all they could have and has rightly identified this as a priority.

Much improved use is made of assessment information to support learning so that most lessons meet the needs of pupils of differing abilities, although the more able do not always get enough attention from staff. There is an effective system for establishing pupils' attainment on entry, whether in the Foundation Stage or in other years where the school has a high level of pupil mobility. Appropriate targets are set for each pupil and group of pupils, their progress is monitored regularly and those underachieving are given extra support. The pupils know their targets well because teachers consistently reinforce them. In most lessons the pupils understand how the tasks undertaken contribute to meeting their targets and, in the words of one pupil, are keen 'to conquer them'. However, pupils are not involved enough in reviewing and setting their own targets. Teachers are more accountable for pupils' progress and those in positions of responsibility, such as subject coordinators, make more effective use of assessment information to find where improvements, for example in lesson content, are required.

Attendance has continued to improve. The overall figure for the last academic year is markedly higher than for the previous year, although still below the national average. There are good systems to encourage all pupils to attend well and to support poorly attending pupils in coming to school regularly. The school is well focused on improving attendance further and coordinates its work effectively with LA personnel.

The LA is providing a good range of well sequenced initiatives to improve both pupils' achievement in the short term and the school's capacity to sustain the improvements in the long term. There is a suitable emphasis on improving monitoring and evaluation by all those in positions of responsibility, giving the school clearer knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses so that it can be proactive in moving forward.

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

Yours sincerely
S . J . Long
Stephen Long
Her Majesty's Inspector