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12 October 2007

Mrs C Dunlop  
St George's Church of England Aided Primary School  
Kesteven Road  
Stamford  
Lincolnshire  
PE9 1SX

Dear Mrs Dunlop

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 10 October 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.

As a result of the inspection on 25 and 26 January 2007, the school was asked to raise standards in English, especially in writing, by giving all pupils, and especially boys the opportunity to write more; to improve the quality of teaching and learning by using assessment information more systematically to match activities with pupils' precise needs; to develop subject leaders skills in order to drive up standards, and to strengthen the management of the school; and to ensure all pupils have personal targets to guide their learning and know what to do to achieve them.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making inadequate progress in addressing the points for improvement. This visit has raised serious concerns about the standard of education provided.

Since the time of the inspection there have been significant factors which have impeded the school's capacity to make progress. High staff turnover and absence have caused instability within this small school. Support is currently required for four out of the seven class teachers. An additional issue which emerged following the inspection was provision in the foundation stage and considerable energy has been spent to improve the range of experiences, and security of assessment. A new specialist teacher has taken this forward.

The local authority's (LA) statement of support provided an appropriate action plan with milestones to track progress. However, timely training has not been provided in key areas, which has resulted in significant slippage. The exception has been the effective training for teaching assistants to develop their roles and expertise in delivering intervention strategies for targeted groups of pupils. Input from a literacy consultant has led to greater consistency in the use of guided reading across the

school with an improvement in the average point score in Key Stage 1 and 2 this year. The LA acknowledges the vulnerability of the school given the current staffing profile and has reviewed and increased the package of support.

Results in 2007 were mixed but standards were broadly average overall. These results reinforced the school's priorities on writing and able pupils, and indicated an emerging concern about science. Progress has been very limited on the development of writing skills across the school, resulting from a lack of training and subject leadership for literacy. Planning is at an early stage and although the use of levelled targets is beginning, teachers are over dependent on tests to level pupils work. There are insufficient opportunities for extended writing across the curriculum, and for skills to be transferred, such as the planning of writing. There is recognition that provision needs to develop further to meet the needs of pupils arriving with English as an additional language.

The school has now established an effective system for recording base level assessment, and end of Key Stage targets. However, there is limited evidence that teachers are using assessment information to plan activities which match pupils' needs, or to track progress. In lessons observed assessment for learning was a weaker feature, pupils understanding was not always checked which resulted in a lack of pace in learning, or an over dependence on the teacher. This meant that in some cases pupils were working below national standards. The use of personal targets is at an early stage and not fully integrated in the work of the school. Older learners are more aware of targets in reading, writing and mathematics but these are not always expressed in a 'child friendly' way. The learning environment includes many vibrant displays but is not used effectively to guide pupils in ways to improve their work. Progress identified in the LA plan for April has been hampered by a delay in appropriate training; this has now been confirmed for the Autumn Term.

The school has taken appropriate steps to appoint subject leaders for literacy and numeracy. Both have taken steps to gather information but at this point the roles are undeveloped. Essential training and support is planned this term. This means that there remains a heavy dependence on the strong leadership of the headteacher. She has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, but is dependent on external support to secure the capacity to improve. The governing body has established the role of deputy head to strengthen school leadership, this role also combines numeracy, and teaching and learning. Given the number of new and temporary teachers the focus has been on supporting colleagues, rather than strategic development. Systems for the regular and rigorous evaluation of teaching, and areas of staff responsibility are not yet in place.

There is a strong commitment by the school, governors and local authority to bring stability and improvement to the school. Governors have increased their involvement in school through regular meetings, and links with subject leaders. An experienced LA governor has added strength to the team, modelling the role of critical friend. Good support and professional development has been provided by the school's improvement partner. Governors have been disappointed that essential training by the LA has been delayed but are now reassured by a programme of intensive

support, and input from an experienced advanced skills teacher and headteacher to assist the school in addressing areas for improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Nada Trikić  
Her Majesty's Inspector