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Mrs Meri Knights  
Headteacher  
Rownhams St John's Church of England Primary School  
Bakers Drove  
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SO16 8AD

Dear Mrs Knights

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 18 May 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks for their time to the chair of governors, the local authority representative and the pupils.

Since the last inspection, the senior management team has been reformed with clearer roles and responsibilities. The deputy headteacher has announced his retirement and a new appointment has been made for September.

As a result of the inspection on 23 and 24 October 2009, the school was asked to:

- raise standards and achievement, especially in mathematics at Key Stage 2, by ensuring that lessons provide activities that match the needs of pupils of all ability levels
- use the tracking systems to monitor pupils' progress in mathematics more closely, and take effective action to address slow progress at a much earlier stage
- ensure that the plans for addressing key areas for school improvement include clear success criteria so that outcomes can be accurately measured and leaders held accountable in order to accelerate the pace of change within the school.

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 pupils' achievement.

New assessment procedures are contributing well to improving pupils' standards and achievement levels, particularly in mathematics. Current Year 6 pupils are on track to attain average standards in mathematics and English. There are some pockets of

residual underachievement among older pupils, but the school's tracking data show that overall pupils are achieving satisfactorily.

A programme of in-service training has had a beneficial effect on the teaching of mathematics. Work for pupils of different abilities is now planned. Some inconsistency remains, where tasks rather than learning expectations are identified, and consequently pupils' progress slows. Pupils know their learning objectives but many could be further refined to identify the learning expected of different ability groups. More opportunities exist for pupils to discuss and explain their calculations. This is helping them to engage more with their learning. Bright displays, including the 'working walls' in mathematics and English, help inform pupils well about their learning. In the mathematics lessons seen, there was a good variety of activities, including games. These met pupils' differing learning styles and boosted motivation. Very positive relationships exist: pupils want to be involved and to answer questions. However, teachers do not consistently pose a second question to challenge further pupils' knowledge and understanding. Behaviour in lessons is good, and pupils are well supported by learning support assistants, who keep good, detailed diaries showing the progress of pupils in their group. Pupils know their learning targets in mathematics and English. However, while teachers' marking is supportive, it does not consistently give a clear indication of how the pupils can improve their work.

Good progress has been made on tracking pupils' progress. An established monitoring cycle is providing regular and essential information which clearly shows how well pupils are achieving. Regular assessments take place in English and mathematics and the results are centrally collated. Senior leaders hold teachers more accountable during meetings that review pupils' progress and identify any underachievement. The impact of any resulting support programmes for pupils is reviewed every three weeks. The good use of these tracking arrangements undoubtedly has a positive impact on improving standards and achievement levels, particularly in mathematics. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, good on-going assessment has led to a similar identification of the need for support for some pupils in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy. The school acknowledges the need for further refinement of its assessment systems and analyses to show the progress of pupil groups.

A newly focused school development plan has satisfactorily addressed the issues identified at the last inspection and more measurable success criteria are identified. In this plan, as well as in subject action planning, there is a need to develop milestone dates, which would help to break down the success criteria into smaller, more manageable objectives. The individuals responsible for monitoring the development plan have been identified. However, less attention is paid to the methodology behind the monitoring, with the result that it is too general. The school has continued to embed the curriculum teams that have responsibility for developing subjects. The benefits have been in the sharing of good practice and in staff development. Science, in particular, has benefited from good attention to curriculum reform, which has resulted in more problem solving and investigations. Some subject leaders in these teams have carried out monitoring duties. However, there is a need

for others to experience lesson observations and to carry out work scrutiny so that they can gain a better view of academic standards, help develop a strategic overview of the subject area and, consequently, benefit development planning. Subject action plans are insufficiently linked to the whole-school development plan, which again reflects the need for further management training for these leaders. Governors have received guidance and training and are now playing a fuller part in monitoring the school.

The school has been in receipt of a good level of external support from the local authority, from individual consultants and from other professional advisers.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Pye  
Additional Inspector