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11 December 2009

Mrs L White
Interim Headteacher
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Dear Mrs White

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 December 2009 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to the Chair of Governors for his time in talking to me on the telephone.

Since the inspection in May, there have been several organisational and staffing changes. The nursery and reception classes are now housed in a purpose built Early Years Foundation Stage unit. After some weeks this term in three mixed age classes, the Key Stage 1 pupils were reorganised into a class of Year 1 and a class of Year 2 pupils. Three teachers have left the school and another will leave at the end of this term. Three newly qualified teachers have joined the staff. The headteacher has been absent since June. The local authority arranged for a consultant headteacher to lead the school until the end of the summer term. An interim headteacher was appointed in early September for two terms.

As a result of the inspection on 7 and 8 May 2009, the school was asked to raise standards and achievement, particularly for the more able pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2; to improve teaching and learning; to make better use of assessment to set more challenging targets for pupils; and to ensure that managers use information about pupils' achievement to evaluate and direct action and hold staff accountable.

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 the pupils' achievement.

The school rightly welcomed the improvement in its results in the national tests for pupils in Year 6. The support invested in boosting their performance paid off well.



Although the results were higher than in 2008 this was as it should be given the performance and potential of these pupils at the end of Year 2. A success was the rise in standards in mathematics to just above the national average – for the first time in five years. Some pupils made really good progress which helped to lift the overall value added to well above average. The school met nearly all of its targets for the performance of the Year 2 pupils, and acknowledges that too few pupils do better than Level 2B, the level expected for their age.

The current work of pupils in Years 2, 4 and 6 shows positive signs of progress in using lively language and appreciating differing formats for different types of writing. However, too many older pupils do not use joined handwriting, misspell common words and fail to punctuate their writing correctly. The lack of basic skills is also evident in mathematics at Key Stage 2, particularly in pupils' incomplete knowledge of multiplication tables and appreciation of place value. In science, pupils are gaining scientific knowledge and carrying out some investigations. While they are predicting possible outcomes, they are less secure in coming to conclusions and evaluating what they find out.

This inspection confirmed the findings of the monitoring conducted by the local authority in that the school has not met its target of 75% good teaching by the end of October. There are strengths in the teaching not least in the engaging ideas that catch the pupils' interest, the good relationships between pupils and staff, the focus on key information in displays in classrooms and the team work of teachers and teaching assistants. What prevents pupils' learning from being consistently good is the inconsistency in

- the use and sharing of targets and success criteria
- the identification of the needed steps in learning
- the modelling by adults of what the pupils are to do
- the questioning to probe and check pupils' understanding
- the marking of pupils' work to indicate how well they have done and what they need to do next to do better.

A good start has been made in collating and analysing performance data. This has been time consuming as information was incomplete and too often unreliable or contradictory. Nevertheless, the current system and formats give staff an indication of how well their pupils are doing in relation to national expectations and to the targets set. This is reinforced by the thorough analysis by the School Improvement Partner of the school's performance in the last school year and overview of targets for 2010. Recent meetings to discuss pupils' progress have highlighted the variability in current rates of progress within and between subjects, and also the poor progress made by too many pupils in previous years. Expectations of pupils are rising and the available information has been used well to plan support for pupils who have fallen behind, such as the one-to-one tuition in mathematics for some older pupils to plug gaps in knowledge and foster mathematical understanding. Much has also been done to raise the profile of reading with the purchase of new books, daily sessions in guided reading and in linking sounds and letters (phonics), and support for those



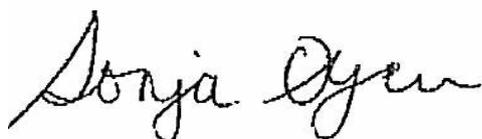
who have been slow to take off as readers. Records from this term show that such support is having a positive impact even if some pupils still have a long way to go to catch up. The school is now in a strong position to track pupils' progress and to differentiate between those pupils who have made good progress to catch up, and are now where they should be, and those pupils who have made good progress to move ahead of where they should be.

The appointment of an experienced interim headteacher has ensured leadership stability, renewed the sense of purpose and brought a fresh approach to running the school. The interim headteacher has coped well with a range of unexpected issues, some resulting from the building work, and she has rightly focussed on tightening required systems and reinstating core procedures that had lapsed. She has also gained an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and learning, and drawn on resources and services within the local authority to ensure the staff have what they need to move forward. Nevertheless, impending changes in staffing and weak spots in leadership and management place the school in a fragile situation. While in a very strong position to quicken the pace of improvement because of the considerable financial and professional advice and support from the local authority, the school has limited capacity to drive improvement from within. Not all staff with posts of responsibility have the required expertise. There is an urgent need to clarify the expectations of all key staff in leading and managing strands of the improvement plan. The Chair of the Governing Body has an informed view of the school's current situation through regular meetings with the interim headteacher and representatives from the local authority. The minutes from meetings of the governing body, however, include limited reference to the school's progress in meeting the key issues from the last inspection or to the impact of action taken.

The statement of action from the local authority was detailed with a clear focus on substantial input in this and the spring term not only on key aspects related to the four key issues but also contributory strands, such as pupils' attendance. The local authority recognises that, as the school's progress has been better in some aspects than others, there is a need to focus even more strongly on aspects of professional development and ensure a shift towards to pupils' learning.

This monitoring visit included a check on the school's safeguarding procedures and found them to be secure and meeting current requirements.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sonja Øyen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mrs Sonja Øyen
Her Majesty's Inspector

