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Ms C Walsh  
Headteacher  
Temple Meadow Primary School  
Wrights Lane  
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Dear Ms Walsh

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 19 November 2009 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please also convey my thanks to the staff and pupils with whom I spoke.

The school has successfully managed a period of substantial change to senior leadership and school administration practices since the inspection in April 2009. A new acting deputy headteacher started in September 2009, and will be replaced in the spring of 2010 with another acting deputy headteacher. There is a new school improvement partner from September 2009. Major challenges relating to financial management have been resolved, and the school now has a clear budget plan that is supported by the local authority. However, it has yet to receive promised funding from Black Country Challenge, and is concerned that this delay is hampering further investment in school improvement.

As a result of the inspection on 28 – 29 April 2009, the school was asked to:

- Raise pupils' achievement and improve progress by more effective and consistent use of assessment data and ensuring that higher attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effectively challenged and supported.
- Improve provision for pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that their achievement is raised.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to understand the common values shared with other people in Britain and internationally in order to promote community cohesion successfully.

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 results of the most recent national tests and assessments of pupils in the previous academic year 2008/09 showed that attainment was low by the end of Year 6, and pupils made inadequate progress in relation to their starting points. The tests were taken less than a month after the inspection, giving the school very little time to effect measurable improvements. The school has put in place practices to assess pupils' progress, including thorough evaluations of young children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The first half-term from September 2009 of this system shows most pupils to be making the expected progress in writing at Key Stage 2. Pupils' work is well marked and accurately levelled against National Curriculum criteria. The school is being well-supported by external consultants, and is confident that the majority of staff are consistently using the criteria. That evidence, and the samples of work seen during the visit, confirm that pupils' attainment still below age-related expectations. However, pupils generally show good levels of verbal reasoning, and their reading is broadly in line with the levels expected for their age, but standards of writing are well below expectations.

The school and local authority are aware of this quite startling miss-match in outcomes. During the visit some very good practice in extended writing was observed, with pupils in Years 2 and 3 enjoying an intensive and uninterrupted session of writing. In other lessons, although teachers were putting a lot of effort into setting out the task required of pupils, too much lesson time was taken up by this discussion. The best learning and teaching was happening when pupils were actually working in small, similar-ability groups and receiving more personalised input from teachers and classroom support assistants. Overall, teaching seen on this visit was satisfactory with some good features.

Lesson plans generally recognised a range of different ability 'options' but did not explicitly identify children with special educational needs, or those on the gifted and talented register. Sometimes, different materials were provided for different ability groups. Teachers worked with both less- and more- able groups, alternating with teaching assistants between them, which is good practice. Some more able pupils said that they would enjoy 'more difficult homework' tasks. Marking was thorough and informative, but as yet most pupils are not routinely responding to the advice. There is scope for pupils to be given time to correct work after it has been returned to them.

The physical environment in the Early years Foundation Stage is much better, and pupils now enjoy a very rich range of resources. In one example, very good assessment by the teacher identified a misunderstanding about number value. She quickly gathered pupils together to explain, using models, why one number was bigger than another. Planning in this reception class was good, and the pace of learning high because teachers did not dwell upon whole class discussion, but

quickly moved pupils into small groups and then ensured each child was engaged in learning. As a result, provision here is improving rapidly and achievement is accelerating.

The school has responded effectively to the need to improve provision for community cohesion. It has begun to tackle the need to audit local needs and interests, and appointed a teacher to lead on this strand from September 2009. Equally importantly, the school has organised two recent experiences for pupils to celebrate Eid and Divali. These events involved local parents from different cultural backgrounds, for the first time. It has triggered some very positive engagement of these parents, who had previously had little opportunity to contribute to school life. Pupils spoke enthusiastically of their visits to different places of worship, and to different cities and historical settings. Most pupils are involved in after-school activities, and speak well of the impact of the school council on improvements to playtime facilities.

The school and local authority are working well together in raising the quality of teaching and learning. There had been very little staff professional development in recent years, and there remains much work to be done by staff to refresh their knowledge and understanding of current practice. However, morale is good and there is a spirit of shared endeavour and commitment to school improvement, led by the headteacher. Ofsted evaluated the original local authority action plan, and judged that some amendments were required. It has now been improved with the addition of some explicit pupil outcome targets, although much of it is still too generic. Events on the ground have moved on swiftly. The school's own improvement plan includes detailed milestones and is updated frequently. The combined Local Authority and school plans are sufficient at this stage. The school is part of Black Country Challenge, and receives visits from their advisers that are generally supportive although promised funding has not yet arrived in the school.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Cartwright".

Brian Cartwright

Her Majesty's Inspector