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Mrs V Jones  
Dennington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
Laxfield Road  
Dennington  
Woodbridge  
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IP13 8AE

Dear Mrs Jones

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 23 February 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit.

Since the last inspection, and following a lengthy period of uncertainty, the acting headteacher, who was also the permanent headteacher at Charsfield Primary School, has very recently been confirmed as the joint headteacher of both schools.

As a result of the inspection on 2-3 July 2009, the school was asked to:

- Improve progress through effective use of tracking systems to set challenging targets and raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Ensure that pupils are actively involved in improving their own work by agreeing, and regularly reviewing, individual targets with them.
- Develop the roles and responsibilities of subject leaders, particularly in monitoring the pupils' work and improving teaching.
- Implement plans to improve provision for outdoor activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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 headteacher, with close support from the local authority, is rapidly tackling the barriers to pupils' achievement stemming from teachers' lack of professional development in previous years. The initiatives underway have focused strongly on improving pupils' learning and are having a positive impact on attainment in reading and writing. For example, teaching and learning in English are being improved through work with a visiting teacher who has 'advanced skills' status. At present, there have been no foci on mathematics, and pupils' rates of progress in this subject



are generally slower. Of critical importance is the need to ensure that teachers are consistently accurate in their assessments of pupils' attainment, and work towards this goal is now underway through joint moderation exercises involving staff from Charsfield, the new 'partner' school. The newly adopted system for tracking pupils' progress provides clear information. However, its usefulness as an aid to setting consistently challenging targets for pupils' attainment and progress is partially affected by missing data together with some unreliable assessments from previous years. Target-setting at an individual level is now in place, but is not yet fully embedded, and the systems used differ from class to class. All pupils are clear about the goals set for them in literacy and numeracy, and these have recently been discussed with their parents for the first time. Improvement is needed in teachers' marking of pupils' work. At its best, teachers give clear guidance about what pupils need to do next to reach their goals. However, in some instances, the work set for pupils is not linked to their targets. Sometimes, marking makes no reference to targets and opportunities to ensure that pupils improve their work by making corrections are not taken.

A key improvement is that learning objectives are now shared with pupils during lessons, although these are not always written in language that pupils can easily understand. The success criteria which underpin these learning objectives, by providing the necessary layers of challenge for pupils of different levels of attainment, generally lack clarity and precision. In some instances they are not shared with pupils, therefore when pupils evaluate each others' work they do not always know precisely what they are supposed to be looking for. The lack of linkage between the success criteria and the National Curriculum statements of attainment means that pupils' progress is not being accelerated as sharply as it might be.

Because of the strong focus placed on improving assessment and providing clear targets, there has been too little time available to develop teachers' skills as managers. The headteacher and local authority adviser are well aware of this, but are rightly ensuring that improvements in the classroom have priority. At present, teachers' attendance at training courses and local meetings is successfully broadening their perspectives.

Construction work to complete the outdoor learning area for the Early Years Foundation Stage was severely delayed by adverse weather conditions during the latter part of the autumn term. Very little remains to be done and activities to be provided have already been planned.

The local authority statement of action for the school has been evaluated by Ofsted and judged as fulfilling requirements. Specialist advice and support have been provided as required.

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

Mike Thompson

Additional Inspector

