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Miss Helen McKay
St Michael's CofE (C) Primary School
Sturgeons Hill
Lichfield
WS14 9AW

Dear Miss McKay

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 11 May 2010 and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass my thanks on to the staff, pupils and parents for taking the time to talk to me.

Since the school's last inspection, there have been some significant staff changes. The deputy headteacher was seconded from September 2009 to support another school in the local authority. At the end of November, an associate deputy headteacher joined the school. At the start of the summer term, two teachers took up posts, one of whom is the numeracy leader. The literacy subject leader left for promotion at the end of the spring term and this role is being covered by an internal appointment. There is an acting phase leader and a temporary teacher covering a maternity leave.

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

- accelerate pupils' progress in writing and mathematics in Years 1 to 4
- sharpen up monitoring and evaluation procedures
- implement a strategy for community cohesion
- improve communication with parents and carers.

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.

Despite a slow and difficult start, you and the senior leadership team have made sound progress in raising pupils' achievement. School assessment data show an improvement in the standards pupils are reaching in writing and mathematics. The underachievement identified in the inspection is being addressed successfully and so the rate of progress is accelerating. In the lessons observed, the majority of pupils were making at least satisfactory progress. That said, progress must be at least good



in order to raise standards quickly. Learning and progress have improved at a faster rate during the spring term. This must be maintained and built upon so that the achievement gap is closed rapidly. Teaching assistants are not used well enough in all lessons. This requires improvement to ensure best use is made of their valuable skills and expertise.

There is a strong sense of team work across the school. You have successfully established a shared vision and a greater consistency of practice. Pupils are closely tracked and interventions used where appropriate. Monitoring and evaluation are more rigorous and increased accountability is helping to raise the expectations of all staff regarding pupils' capabilities. Pupils are keen to articulate their targets in mathematics and writing and can explain what they need to do to improve. One pupil explained that his teacher encouraged the class 'to reach for the moon'. Teachers' planning identifies the learning expected for pupils of all abilities. Assessment information is collated each term and staff are held accountable for pupils' progress through regular meetings with senior staff. All teachers provide feedback to parents and pupils about their progress. The helpful, written guidance pupils receive is contributing to the improved progress seen in pupils' writing and mathematics books throughout Years 1 to 4.

Governance is improving. Restructuring the governing body has resulted in the formation of a core and a strategy group. This has provided fresh impetus and clearer focus on learning and progress. The core group of governors actively monitors progress data and meet half termly to hold the headteacher to account. Since the inspection, governors have worked closely with the school to improve communication with parents and carers. Parents say they appreciate regular communication, for example, weekly letters on the updated website. Almost all parents seen during the visit were positive about the improvements and one parent commented how much she valued the governors' monthly 'drop-ins'. These give parents the opportunity to raise any questions or concerns. Nevertheless, governors have more to do to hold the senior leaders to account for any weaknesses.

An audit of community cohesion has been conducted and an appropriate action plan put in place. Pupils understand and value the diversity of their school community and have a growing awareness of the wider local community. Although a start has been made to develop appropriate links with contrasting settings, pupils' understanding of communities in the United Kingdom and around the world remains under-developed. The action plan is at an early stage and the school has yet to consider how to evaluate the impact of any planned actions.

Over the past year, the school has received an appropriate level of support from the local authority. The associate deputy headteacher, English consultant, School Improvement Partner and advanced skills teacher have all provided good, targeted support. This has resulted in an unambiguous, whole-school focus on raising achievement for all pupils.



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

Linda Rockey
Her Majesty's Inspector

