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Ms L Manley
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Manley

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 25 May 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please thank your Chair of the Governing Body, the staff and pupils who contributed to the inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 9–10 November 2009, the school was asked to:

- improve outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- raise standards in writing across Key Stage 2
- enhance the quality of assessment in Key Stages 1 and 2
- improve the school's contribution to community cohesion
- work with parents to improve the rates of pupil attendance.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress overall in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Time spent in the Nursery and Reception classes confirms that the appointment of two new members of staff with a specific responsibility for the Early Years Foundation Stage is having a very positive impact on the overall provision for these children. Discussions with parents confirm that they are pleased with the changes being made and are very happy with the progress their child is making. The children enter the classes at the start of the day in a buzz of excitement as they participate in worthwhile learning experiences under the guidance of their dedicated key worker. Teamwork is a strong feature in all classes. Learning experiences are carefully planned for both the indoor and outdoor activity areas to give all children opportunities to develop their skills in all the areas of learning expected for this age group. A strong focus is placed on the children's communication skills and phonic development. Good teaching ensures that all children are now making good, and

sometimes rapid, progress in their early literacy skills and all other areas of learning. Consequently, outcomes are rapidly improving and progress on this key issue has been good.

Standards in writing across Key Stage 2 are improving as a result of the much stronger focus being placed on the development of the pupils' communication skills and an insistence on greater accuracy in their writing. Teachers give pupils opportunities to write at length for a range of different purposes. Inspection evidence confirms that the quality of learning is good and pupils are keen to improve, working with enthusiasm to complete their work. Scrutiny of pupils' books and analysis of detailed assessment data confirms that the rate of progress in writing has increased since the previous inspection. Accurate teacher assessment indicates that standards in English will be broadly in line with the nationally expected levels by the end of Year 6, with about one in five of these pupils working at the higher Level 5 in writing. Progress has been good on this key issue.

A wealth of data is gathered about the achievements of each individual pupil. Senior staff and teachers refer to this data regularly to monitor the progress of pupils in each class. This has led to successful interventions and further support in English and mathematics. All teachers are now fully involved in the process of gathering this data and, consequently, have a better picture of each pupil's skills and knowledge in all subjects. Marking procedures have been refined following useful input by a local authority consultant. This has led to teachers marking pupils' writing in detail against specific learning criteria and informing pupils what they need to do next to improve. Pupils value the depth of this marking, responding well to the advice given by their teacher. In the best examples seen, this leads to a 'written conversation' between the pupil and teacher and rapid progress. However, this practice is not consistent across the school, leading to missed opportunities for the acceleration of pupil progress in all classes. Overall progress on this key issue has been satisfactory.

Pupil attendance is improving as a result of determined efforts by the headteacher, learning mentor and other staff. Rigorous monitoring procedures are now in place and, combined with imaginative strategies to promote good attendance rates, pupils are keen to be in school. Home visits and coffee mornings are used effectively to inform parents of pupils who are persistently absent about the importance of their child being in school. The practice of holidays during term time is no longer allowed by the governing body. As a result of these actions, the proportion of persistent absentees has reduced by around a third and overall attendance has improved from being poor to just below the national average. Progress on this key issue has been good.

The school has now undertaken a thorough audit of curriculum experiences and this is being used effectively to provide greater opportunities for the promotion of community cohesion within both a national and international context. Training sessions for staff and governors have raised levels of awareness and a clear plan of

action is in place. Progress on this key issue is satisfactory because initiatives are yet to have a significant impact on pupils' outcomes.

School leadership has established a culture of improvement throughout the school. The headteacher is inspirational, setting high expectations for both pupils and staff alike. A strong sense of teamwork is evident amongst the senior leadership team who meet weekly to review progress against a very detailed plan for improvement. This provides a firm foundation for further progress. Furthermore, the local authority provides good levels of support to develop teachers' skills and support school management. Comprehensive termly reviews by the local authority provide regular opportunities for governors to monitor the school's progress in addressing the key issues for improvement. However, the current procedures to involve governors in school improvement and self-evaluation are underdeveloped.

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

Philip Mann
Her Majesty's Inspector