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Mrs Susan Hallam
Ryhall CofE Primary School
Church Street
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Stamford
PE9 4HR

Dear Mrs Hallam

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Ryhall CofE Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 11 January 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass my thanks to the pupils, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and the representative of the local authority for the time they gave to meeting with me.

The school has had a new School Improvement Partner since September 2010 and a programme of building work was recently completed.

As a result of the inspection on 13 and 14 May 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

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 2010 Key Stage 2 test results in both English and mathematics were an improvement on the preceding year. These results were close to the national average although fewer pupils gained the higher levels, particularly in mathematics. These improved results were a reflection of the better progress pupils are now making than was the case in 2009. The school's increasingly accurate assessment information, together with observations made during this visit, suggest that pupils are making better progress in most classes. In some of the lessons seen, more able pupils made less progress because they were not always able to undertake work that was appropriately challenging. A more systematic approach to the teaching of letters and sounds in the Early Years Foundation is ensuring that pupils are better prepared for lessons in Key Stage 1 and beyond.

The school's approach to planning learning has much to commend it. For instance, the school is more systematically identifying weaknesses in pupils' literacy and numeracy and is beginning to identify opportunities in other subjects to address these. In general the school has made the greatest progress in terms of promoting pupils' literacy skills through the other subjects than is the case for mathematics. However, Year 4 pupils spoke enthusiastically about their mathematics work related to their studies of China.

Growing strengths are evident in much of the teaching seen during the visit. The planning of lessons has improved because teachers are more aware of pupils' strengths and weaknesses. In most classes different work is provided that is generally matched well to the needs of pupils particularly for those who are of middle or low ability. Staff are much more focused on the learning outcomes for pupils. In the most effective lessons seen pupils are actively involved in discussing what they must do to achieve really well. Some teachers were observed pausing lessons in order to clarify the required learning, for instance by asking pupils to imagine the improvements a teacher might suggest when marking their summaries of a Norse myth. In lessons and in pupils' books examples were also seen of missed opportunities to challenge pupils, particularly the more able. More able older pupils devote too much time to consolidating previous learning and there are insufficient opportunities for them to make choices that allow them to experience a greater level of challenge, particularly in mathematics. For instance, able Year 6 pupils were observed chanting multiplication tables that they had already previously mastered.

There has been limited progress in improving the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage environment. This reduces the impact of the improved approach to the teaching of letters and sounds that has been adopted.

Teachers' marking has improved. Pupils receive regular feedback on how they can improve their work. Pupils value the opportunity they have to be involved in assessing each other's work. Some pupils said that they sometimes do not remember the guidance they have been previously given when undertaking new work. The school is aware of this tendency and is already taking steps to remedy this situation. Pupils also spoke positively about their target cards which they can use these to communicate how confident they feel about their learning. Older pupils do not have sufficient access to the full range of assessment criteria to enable them to take greater responsibility for their own learning.

The school is sensibly using a blend of teachers' assessment and testing to ensure that there is confidence in how it tracks pupils' progress. The school is beginning to effectively hold teachers to account for the progress their pupils make. This is most apparent when learners with special needs and/or learning difficulties are considered. This is enabling the better targeting of interventions, including the use of more one to one support for pupils.

A clear schedule has been formulated in order to involve leaders in regular monitoring activity. Lessons are regularly observed and astute areas for improvement are identified. Among subject leaders there is an accurate awareness of pupils' weaknesses and a reasonable start has been made in adjusting the curriculum and teaching to better meet the needs of most groups of pupils. The governing body has reorganised their committee structure to ensure they can keep a much closer eye on the impact of provision on the outcomes for pupils. Most staff are actively and enthusiastically supporting improvement. Senior leaders are clear about the challenges that lie ahead and are showing determination in dealing with any problems that arise.

The school is receiving effective external support. A detailed statement of action has been created that contains realistically challenging milestones. This document is being used to effectively check progress. The school has received a perceptive report on its Early Years Foundation Stage provision, although insufficient action has been taken in response to this. The school's new School Improvement Partner is providing an enhanced level of challenge to the governing body and the school's senior leadership team.

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

Kevin Sheldrick

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010.

- Raise attainment across the school by May 2011 and improve rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - improving the focus on literacy and numeracy in the curriculum so that areas of study are covered in greater depth
 - improving the quality of teaching and learning to match the best practice in the school.
- Improve the quality of feedback to pupils so they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Develop the role of subject leaders by:
 - implementing plans for leaders to regularly monitor and review all aspects of their subject
 - ensuring that leaders use the school's analysis of data to help inform their decisions about where to target efforts on improvement.