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7 July 2010

Ms Janet Reid
The Headteacher
Yeo Valley Primary School
Derby Road
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Dear Ms Reid

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 30 June 2010 and for the information which you provided both before and during my visit. I am particularly grateful to the members of staff, governors, pupils and the local authority adviser who gave time to discuss the school's work with me. Please pass on my thanks to them.

Since the last inspection in November 2009 there have been some changes in staffing due to maternity leave or absence through sickness. The position of deputy headteacher is vacant and a new permanent appointment has been made to take effect from September 2010. Also, the local authority has arranged for an experienced governor to join the governing body on a temporary basis.

As a result of the inspection on 18 November 2009, the school was asked to address the following areas for improvement:

- improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- raise achievement and standards in writing, particularly in Years 1 to 3
- improve the quality of teaching by sharing the best practice in the use of assessment information to plan activities that meet the needs of all groups of pupils
- extend the governing body's knowledge of how to monitor and challenge the school's performance.

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.

Children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage was judged to be inadequate by the last inspection. Current data and observations demonstrate a trend of improving progress. A greater proportion of children now reach the expected levels for their age in communication, language and literacy and in personal, social and emotional development. Provision has been strengthened since the last inspection. Staff have visited other settings to observe good practice and have received advice from external advisers. As a result, they have reviewed their curriculum planning to provide activities which are more varied and which promote children's learning more effectively. Accommodation in the two Reception classes limits the free flow of learning between the indoor and outdoor areas, although the school has good plans to improve it. Better use is made of questioning to extend children's speaking and listening skills. Occasionally, tasks are not pitched at the right level for a few children who struggle to maintain concentration. The use of assessment information has improved, although evidence to record children's progress is not always closely linked to a specific area of learning.

The school's assessment data and the quality of work in pupils' books demonstrate that pupils' attainment in writing is improving, although too few are working at the higher levels. Pupils' attainment in writing in Years 1, 2 and 3 is below that expected for their age, particularly for some girls. However, learning and progress have accelerated and pupils who started Year 1 with low levels of literacy are catching up. Several strategies have been introduced which are having success. For example, the sharper use of targets for improvement, intensive support for pupils experiencing difficulty and more opportunities for pupils to engage in discussion and thereby generate ideas to extend their writing. Attractive displays in classrooms and around the school have helped to raise the profile of writing.

The quality of teaching varies across the school and consistency has been affected by recent staff changes. However, the drive of the headteacher has maintained a steady pace of improvement in teaching and learning during a challenging time. Teachers across the school share a strong commitment to improving pupils' learning and expectations are generally higher. They now share planning and moderate and discuss pupils' progress more effectively. The use of assessment information to plan lessons has improved, but there remains some variation between classes. Work is marked regularly, although suggestions for improvement are not always followed up. Most children have a clearer understanding of aspects of their work that need improvement. However, some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not have small enough targets that they understand. The monitoring of teaching takes place regularly, although observations are not always followed up by a plan of action for improvement. Subject leaders are more involved in the monitoring of their subjects across the school and in leading staff development.

The governing body has a better understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. It has benefited from a programme of training and has established a committee to monitor the action plan which was implemented after the last

inspection. The provision of more detailed and relevant information, especially on pupils' attainment and progress, is enabling the governing body to form a clearer picture of the school's work and to monitor and challenge its performance more effectively.

The local authority has provided a good level of support to the school through its school improvement service. An appropriate statement of action has been drawn up which has clear success criteria and a realistic timescale for their achievement. Staff have valued advice from a local authority adviser, the School Improvement Partner, educational consultants and a lead literacy teacher. Links with a local primary school have been particularly effective in strengthening the work of the governing body.

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

Andrew Redpath
Her Majesty's Inspector