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Mr P Floyd
Headteacher
North Somercotes CofE Primary School
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Dear Mr Floyd

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of North Somercotes CofE Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 16 November 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, staff and Chair of the Governing Body with whom I met during the day.

Since the last inspection, there have been some significant staff changes. These have included the appointment of a new headteacher in April 2011 and the appointment of a new deputy headteacher in September 2011. A new Chair of the Governing Body was elected in September 2011.

As a result of the inspection on 17 March 2011, 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 good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is rising. The latest published assessment data at the end of Key Stage 2 indicate that attainment in 2011 was higher than in 2010. Different groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making good and improved progress in all year groups, particularly in mathematics. Although the progress of pupils in the current Year 6 group has been

good since the last inspection, they are having to make up for previously weak progress. This means that their attainment is slightly below expected levels for their age.

Consistently good teaching was observed during the inspection. Teachers assess pupils' learning carefully and ensure that lessons are planned accurately to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. Teachers usually share clear learning objectives and success criteria with pupils and, as a result, most pupils understand how their learning is developing. On rare occasions, success criteria are too detailed and lengthy, which makes it harder for some pupils to understand. Teaching assistants receive clear direction from teachers and support the learning of targeted pupils well. The pace of lessons is good. Teachers ensure that they do not talk for too long during lesson introductions and use a broad range of strategies effectively to ensure that pupils are active learners. For example, teachers frequently plan 'talk partner' activities in lessons to enable pupils to discuss ideas and evaluate the effectiveness of learning. Well-organised learning environments further support pupils' increased rates of progress in learning. For example, 'working walls' display up-to-date records and information about pupils' current learning and are frequently referred to by teachers in lessons. The school has begun to implement individual pupil targets in reading, writing and mathematics and 'skills ladders' to enable pupils to track their progress more closely. However, these are at an early stage of development and are not applied consistently across the school.

The curriculum is improving well. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their new topics and could explain in detail how subjects link together more closely than they used to. For example, art activities have been linked closely to mathematical problem-solving tasks. The school's long- and medium-term curriculum plans clearly outline opportunities within topics for pupils to apply and develop their mathematical skills, develop their creative talents and improve their understanding of cultural diversity. However, pupils' understanding of different cultural groups at a national level, for example, within the context of an inner-city area, remain less well developed. Pupils spoke passionately about wooden sculptures and African drumming experiences, that formed part of a themed 'Africa week'. A broad and improved range of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities support the curriculum well. A new lunchtime mathematics club is well attended and a number of pupils also enjoyed a recent sleepover at the school which focused on mathematical problem-solving activities. An improved range of interventions also support pupils needing additional guidance in developing basic number skills, including a 'Numbers Count' programme for pupils in Year 2.

The new headteacher, supported well by the deputy headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body, has been a key driver in the school's rapid improvement. Actions

have been prioritised well and senior leaders have been successful in embedding ambition and direction amongst the staff. Leadership roles have been clearly identified and work to monitor and evaluate the impact of the school's actions upon pupils' learning has been detailed and thorough. The responsibilities of subject coordinators have been clarified but they have not played a significant role in supporting individual teachers to improve practice within their subjects. However, senior leaders have started to organise and prepare staff for this well. For example, teachers have conducted peer observations, to enable them to build up skills in observing and feeding back to colleagues. This has been appreciated and valued by teachers.

The governing body has received relevant training to support its improved effectiveness, including training in better organising roles and responsibilities. Members of the governing body have undertaken a range of monitoring exercises, including 'learning walks' and observations of pupil progress meetings between senior leaders and class teachers. A governing body steering group oversees the school's progress against the key areas identified for improvement in the last inspection and reports back to the full governing body. The information gained from these actions has enabled the governing body to provide school leaders with a good and effective balance of challenge and support. A clear plan outlines how they will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school's work in the future.

The statement of action produced by professional partners on behalf of the local authority following the last inspection fully meets requirements. It provides a clear roadmap towards improving the school's effectiveness. Good support and guidance in implementing the action plan has been provided since the last inspection by professional partners during a time of significant change at the school.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Spencer
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2011

- Make all teaching good or better in order to raise attainment and increase the rate at which pupils make progress in their learning, especially in mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - full use is made of assessment information to plan learning tasks that are appropriately challenging for pupils of all ability levels
 - introductions to lessons and other teacher-led activities are not too long and the best use is made of teaching assistants.

- Improve the curriculum by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their mathematical skills
 - developing more cross-curricular links to make learning more relevant to pupils' needs and interests
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their creative talents
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to gain an understanding of cultural diversity.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - monitoring and evaluation are clearly focused on pupils' learning and the impact of strategies to raise attainment
 - subject coordinators identify what individual teachers need to do to make sure that pupils' progress is consistently good
 - the governing body has the skills and information needed to offer challenge and support in equal measure.