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Ms N Rosewell
Headteacher
Grange Junior School
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Dear Ms Rosewell

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Grange Junior School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 8 February 2011, for the time you gave to our planning meeting and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass my thanks on to the staff and pupils for taking the time to talk to me.

Since the school's last inspection the age range has changed from that of a middle school (with Years 4 to 7) to a junior school (with Years 3 to 6). This has meant an almost 50% turnover in pupils in September and although the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language remains well above average, the majority are now Tamil speakers rather than Somali speakers, which was the case previously. Mobility remains much higher than average. Although staffing structures are stable, the number of non-class-based teachers has been reduced. Plans to amalgamate with the infant school, which shares the site, are at an advanced stage.

As a result of the inspection on 4–5 November 2009, 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 has made:

good progress in making improvements

and

good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Pupils' achievement, especially in English, has improved recently, and senior leaders have a very clear understanding about what the school needs to do to improve this further. This is because the monitoring of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching are well established and resulting in a systematic and rigorous response to underachievement. Very clear and challenging targets are set and assessment evidence shows that good progress is being made towards achieving or exceeding them. The determination across the school to improve outcomes for pupils is clearly evident. As a result of this and effective strategic planning, the school has a good capacity to sustain and develop the improvements that it has made since the last inspection.

In English there has been a significant improvement in attainment. In the most recent national tests the percentage of pupils achieving expected levels was close to the national average, which is much better than in previous years. This cohort's progress was also good as their attainment on entry to Key Stage 2 was well below average. Inspection evidence confirms the school's view that the picture of attainment and progress in English is good throughout the school, especially in reading overall and writing in the older years. In mathematics, although attainment remains well below average, it is improving and the gap has been narrowed considerably between the attainment of boys and girls. This is due to the school's successful use of intervention strategies such as teaching mathematics in gender groups. The school is well aware of the need to improve pupils' understanding of how to apply and use mathematics skills to solve problems, and during the inspection very effective strategies were being used to achieve this. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are making progress at a better rate than the local authority average.

The quality of teaching observed throughout the school during the inspection was good, and some was outstanding. There is a consistently good use of a number of effective strategies to develop pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum. For example, pupils have a wide range of opportunities to write for different purposes, such as through the use of biographies in history topics. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work in terms of the quality of presentation, grammar and spelling, and pupils are keen to give of their best. Planning is carefully adjusted to reflect pupils' learning needs and the quality of teachers' questioning to assess and re-enforce learning is a consistent strength. Marking is detailed and pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve. In the best lessons, highly imaginative activities ensure that pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning and achieve well. In a few lessons the pace was slower, but no inadequate teaching was observed. The emphasis placed on speaking and listening, combined with the careful monitoring and personalised support of pupils who are either at or beyond the initial stage of acquiring English are resulting in their improved achievement in reading and writing.

The school has made very good use of a wide range of support provided or brokered by the local authority. For example, links with a school from a neighbouring authority

judged to be outstanding have been mutually beneficial. The local authority's support for the professional development of teachers has been well targeted and is having a positive impact on the school's improvement.

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

Chris Nye
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2009

- Raise pupils' performance in writing by:
 - ensuring that pupils have sufficient opportunities to experience all types of writing, particularly report writing.
- Work more intensively with girls to improve their attainment in mathematics by:
 - ensuring that the curriculum balances effectively the time spent on number and other aspects, particularly shape and space
 - evaluating systematically the impact of new projects to improve the girls' performance in mathematics.
- Ensure that teaching focuses sharply on how well pupils beyond the initial stages of acquiring English learn in class by:
 - a careful analysis of their responses to questioning
 - disseminating across all classes the good practice in some lessons on checking on pupils' day-to-day learning.