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22 February 2011

Mrs C Hoare
Headteacher
Sutton Manor Community Primary School
Forest Road
Sutton Manor
St Helens
Merseyside
WA9 4AT

Dear Mrs Hoare,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Sutton Manor Community Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 22 February 2011, for the time you gave to our planning meeting and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please could you pass on my thanks to the Chair of the Governing Body, the representative of the local authority and the groups of pupils who took time to speak with me.

As a result of the inspection on 6 May 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter. Since the last inspection two teachers have left the school. A teacher was seconded from another school to manage the Early Years Foundation Stage. This teacher then became the deputy headteacher but then left at the end of 2010. Currently one of the senior leaders is the acting deputy headteacher. There have been significant changes to the building since the last inspection. A new Early Years Foundation Stage unit for the nursery and reception children was created. The school has taken over use of some additional rooms in the building which were previously leased by local authority agencies and a new staff room, office spaces, and small teaching areas have been created.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Since the last inspection, attainment by the end of Key Stage 1 has remained broadly similar. Pupils in these classes underwent significant upheaval because they had different teachers throughout the year. The stability in attainment is testament to the headteacher's determination that pupils' learning should not be put at risk. Pupils' work and the school's data indicate attainment in writing and mathematics for pupils currently in Years 1 and 2 are broadly similar to previous years. There are signs, however, that the progress pupils make is starting to speed up. This is particularly the case towards the end of Key Stage 2. During

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this visit, inspectors observed pupils' learning in each class. In the better lessons, pupils were fully engaged and all groups made at least good progress because the questions, activities and the teaching extended all pupils' skills, knowledge and thinking. In less successful lessons, more-able pupils were not challenged or engaged enough. This meant they spent too much time consolidating what they already knew rather than extending or applying their knowledge and skills. Inspectors spoke to a group of pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6 who confirmed lessons have improved since the last inspection because the teaching is more lively and interesting and pupils are more involved throughout.

Pupils' work in mathematics indicates there is sometimes a lack of challenge because there is an over-emphasis of completing lists of correct calculations rather than applying or extending their skills and knowledge. Despite this, there are clear signs of improvement particularly in Year 6. In 2010, pupils' attainment in this subject was the highest it has been for many years. The quality of pupils' writing is improving in the majority of classes. The content and structure of pupils' work reflects a greater ability to write for different purposes, write complex sentences and to use grammar and punctuation well. In 2010, over 80% of pupils made the expected two levels progress in writing whilst they were in Key Stage 2; this was an improvement on previous years. The school's data and pupils' work indicate there is still some way to go to ensure pupils in each year groups reach the levels they should.

Provision for the younger children in the Reception and Nursery classes has improved because of significant adaptations to the building. A new outdoor space has been created and there are plans to improve this further. Children now access the outdoor space freely and adults work well with individuals and groups of children in child-initiated activities to extend children's skills, knowledge and understanding.

Since the last inspection, the headteacher has established and developed structures and systems to increase the school's capacity to improve. These include an improved system to track pupils' attainment and progress; systems to monitor pupils' achievement; and a senior leadership team to manage teams of staff to lead and coordinate different subjects. The headteacher has a detailed, honest and accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Her work, however, has been hampered by turbulence in staffing which has meant she has taken on too many extra roles and responsibilities. Staffing instability is not yet fully resolved and there remain examples of inadequate and barely satisfactory teaching. Consequently, school improvements and the increase in capacity for improvement are fragile.

The local authority has provided helpful guidance and support. This has been particularly useful in securing greater stability in staffing and in the managing of inadequate teaching. In addition to the help from experts within the local authority, the headteacher has made good use of a National Leader of Education to coach senior leaders and to establish systems to monitor the quality of the school's work.

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

Allan Torr

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place 6 May 2009

- Raise standards of writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1.
- Ensure that higher-attaining pupils, and those with gifts or talents, achieve as well as possible to raise standards in writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Improve the provision of outdoor learning for the children in the Nursery and Reception classes.