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Jonathon Bird
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bird

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 16 November 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the staff, governors, pupils, parents and carers who met with me during my visit.

Since the last inspection, one teacher has left the school and been replaced. The school roll has continued to fall owing to local demographic factors, but this has not altered the organisation of classes. Class sizes have generally become smaller and the consequent financial pressures have been absorbed largely by changes to staff deployment and management time. Partnership working with the neighbouring infant school has strengthened into a 'soft federation', so that the two schools have joint policies and procedures in a growing number of areas of practice.

As a result of the inspection on 10–11 February 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.



Attainment has risen strongly across the school since national test results for Year 6 pupils fell below average in 2009. Detailed school assessment data indicate that Year 6 attainment moved above average in 2010, and that pupils are currently ahead of age-related expectations for all year groups. Given that pupils' attainment on joining the school in Year 3, while fluctuating, has remained in the broadly average range, this indicates that pupils' progress has improved sharply. Inspection evidence confirms this bright picture. The school's accelerated reading scheme has made enthusiastic readers of boys and girls, keen to test their comprehension with questions on the computer and to enjoy the rewards they are given for success. Pupils are consistently mindful of grammar and punctuation when writing, and adapt their writing well to suit different circumstances. They have good basic number skills, and apply these with care and perseverance in solving challenging problems in mathematics.

Teachers generally use assessment information well to adapt work to challenge pupils of all abilities in their classes, and this is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Higher attainers in particular relish the challenges they are given and work very constructively in pairs or small groups to refine and develop their work, building on what they already know. The school makes highly effective use of assessment information to identify pupils who need extra help, and to monitor the success of special intervention programmes put in place to support them. Its comprehensive engagement with external agencies, parents and carers to support its most vulnerable pupils is used locally as a model of good practice. The headteacher's detailed analysis of the progress of different groups of pupils has allowed the school to successfully identify and address underachievement, particularly that of boys, evident in the 2009 national test results. Pupils are given very clear guidance about how to improve their work in English, and in most year groups pupils are sharply aware of very specific literacy targets. Such guidance is not as clear in other subjects.

In discussion with the inspector, pupils were keen to stress how much they enjoy their learning because of the 'fun' they experience in activities in and out of class. Significant recent changes to the curriculum have enabled pupils to apply and develop their skills in a number of interesting contexts or themes. Teachers make effective use of a variety of resources, including information and communication technology, to stimulate pupils' interest in a topic. There remains a tendency in a small minority of lessons for teachers to direct the class too much by talking for too long and not involving pupils enough in developing their ideas, which stifles pupils' independence and occasionally leads to a lack of clarity about what pupils should be learning. In most lessons, however, teachers organise activities very well to allow pupils to work independently or in small groups to develop their work or tackle challenging problems. The school's successful focus on 'positive play' outside the classroom has extended opportunities for pupils to learn throughout the school day.

Leadership has been distributed widely and successfully across the whole teaching staff. Subject leaders have developed their roles well, in monitoring both outcomes



for pupils and the quality of provision in their subjects, through regular and systematic checking of pupils' books and teachers' plans, and through visits to classrooms. They communicate the findings of their monitoring activities to the whole staff in training sessions, and to the governing body through regular, formal meetings with their link governor. Importantly, teachers are given time to carry out and develop their leadership roles, and they appreciate the support given to them by the headteacher and senior leaders. Staff and governors play a full and active role in detailed school self-evaluation and in the development planning which springs from this. The headteacher has built a highly cohesive school community by sharing information on school performance openly and encouraging wide involvement in development planning. Staff confidence in promoting and leading new initiatives has brought the school a number of key awards in the last year, including silver Artsmark and Eco-schools awards.

The school values the support provided by the local authority and its school improvement partner in providing a clear focus for improvement in all areas. In particular, local authority support to develop the accuracy of assessment has helped the school evaluate pupils' progress more effectively, enabling it to concentrate its effort for improvement on areas of greatest need.

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

Ian Hodgkinson

Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

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

- Use assessment to set work that is more closely geared to the needs of individual pupils and which builds on their prior attainment.
- Provide teaching which excites and inspires pupils to be more active and curious learners.
- Develop the capacity and confidence of all staff to take the initiative and contribute to school improvement.