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4 February 2011

Mrs S Bridges
Head of School
Owler Brook Nursery Infants' School
Wensley Street
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S4 8HQ

Dear Mrs Bridges

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Owler Brook Nursery Infants' School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 3 February 2011, 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 governors who gave up their time to speak with me.

Since the last inspection a new leadership team has been established. The head of school, who is a member of the local authority's primary task force, was seconded to the school for two years commencing in January 2010. A new deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher took up permanent positions in September 2010. A phase 1 leader took up post in September 2010 and a phase 2 leader will do so in April 2011, both internal promotions. The equivalent of 3.6 members of staff have left the school due to redundancy or resignation. A new chair of governors took up position in November 2010, with the previous chair remaining on the governing body. A new School Improvement Partner is working with the school. There is no longer a formal learning partnership with another school. Arrangements to recruit a permanent headteacher are underway, with a view to the person appointed taking up post by September 2011 or earlier.

As a result of the inspection on 14 and 15 September 2009, the school was asked to address the 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' attainment is rising and their achievement is improving. In 2010, assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 were higher than in 2009 in all areas, including mathematics which was a weakness at the previous inspection. Attainment rose from being significantly below the national average to being broadly in line with it. The only area where standards still fell significantly short was at the higher level in reading. These results reflect improved progress for that group of pupils when compared with previous groups. There was some variation in

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standards between different groups of pupils, but for some, such as those known to be entitled to free school meals, those who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, their results compare favourably with the same groups nationally. School targets were generally either met or exceeded. The school predicts that these higher standards will be at least maintained, and indeed, may be bettered, in 2011. Comprehensive arrangements for tracking pupils' progress have been introduced and the resulting information is rigorously analysed to identify what action is necessary to keep pupils on track.

Improvements to provision have contributed to the rising standards. A more creative curriculum has been introduced which provides a richer range of experiences to stimulate learning and which promotes more active, independent learning. The quality of teaching has improved. Teachers plan lessons carefully to promote learning for pupils of different abilities, especially in literacy and numeracy. Activities which are interesting and fun and which both require and encourage pupils to be actively involved are provided. There is much more extensive use of information and communication technology by pupils. Pupils are encouraged to think carefully and to explain their answers which help to develop their understanding and their language skills. Pupils are provided with greater challenge, including those in Year 1 for whom it was less evident at the previous inspection. Very positive relationships contribute to a climate within which pupils feel safe, secure and increasingly confident and able to learn. There are aspects of teaching and learning that are sometimes not so strong. For example, adults do not always ensure that every pupil in a group is fully involved in their work when they are giving attention to another individual. Teachers sometimes respond more to pupils who volunteer to answer a question rather than drawing quieter pupils in. Nevertheless, action is being taken to identify and tackle such issues and to systematically improve the quality of teaching and learning.

A more concerted and rigorous approach to monitoring attendance, taking action to improve it and raising parents' and carers' awareness of its importance is resulting in improvements. The introduction of a computerised system has helped improve the analysis of data. Parents and carers are now very actively discouraged from taking children out of school for extended periods, although some still choose to do so. Persistent absence has fallen, although there are still a small number of pupils who do not attend regularly enough.

Improved leadership and management are responsible for the better quality of provision and outcomes. The head of school is playing a particularly effective part, and is increasingly well supported by other leaders. A wide range of improvements is evident, including more strategic vision and direction and comprehensive, rigorous monitoring and evaluation. The staffing structure has been revised. Some positions are currently temporary or have not yet been taken up, but all is in hand. Appropriate plans are being compiled to deal with the transition to the permanent headship. Specific actions have been taken to develop middle leadership, with clearer expectations and accountability of middle leaders but also more time, support and training being provided for them. Governance is stronger, helped by the contribution of key new governors. The governing body has a better understanding of its

role, is questioning school leaders more closely and is expecting, and receiving, clearer information to help it make its judgements.

The local authority has provided effective advice and support in a range of areas such as teaching and learning, personnel and safeguarding, which the school has found to be very valuable. The new School Improvement Partner is also giving some helpful input, such as by providing external validation of the head of school's view of the quality of teaching.

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

Ms Joan McKenna
Additional Inspector



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place 14-15 September 2009

- Raise attainment and pupils' achievement in Key Stage 1, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - improving the quality of teaching and learning from satisfactory to good
 - ensuring challenge for all, particularly pupils in Year 1
 - engaging pupils actively in their learning
 - developing further assessment and tracking systems to support pupils' next learning steps.

- Develop good leadership at all levels by:
 - securing a sustainable staffing structure
 - increasing the contribution of subject leaders to whole-school improvement
 - strengthening governance to ensure that the school is held to account through appropriate challenge and support

- Improve levels of attendance by:
 - working in partnership with community to highlight the key role of attendance in raising pupils' attainment
 - introducing computerised attendance to provide instant, accurate data.