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Mrs D Simpson
Headteacher
Great Preston VC CofE Primary School
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Dear Mrs Simpson

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Great Preston VC CofE Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 9 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 governors, staff and pupils who gave their time to speak with me.

In September 2010, a new headteacher was appointed to the school. Since the last inspection the school has joined the Brigshaw Federated Trust, a formalised partnership arrangement between several primary schools and a secondary school.

As a result of the inspection on 16 and 17 September 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 is satisfactory. Attainment and progress in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 improved well in 2010 as a result of strong subject leadership and good and outstanding teaching in upper Key Stage 2. Outcomes for mathematics placed the school in the top 10% of similar primary schools. Attainment in English was below average and, compared to mathematics, fewer pupils reached the expected level for their age. Improvements in provision are having a positive impact on accelerating pupils' progress in writing at both key stages. Inspectors observed pupils in Year 6 making outstanding progress in developing their writing skills and doing so with evident enjoyment. Work in pupils' books shows that all year groups have more frequent opportunities to practice their extended writing through their work on themed topics as well as in literacy lessons.

Since September 2010, the pace of school improvement has accelerated. The impact is clear at both strategic and operational levels. New systems for monitoring the quality of teaching

January 2011



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

are robust. Teachers understand their own strengths and areas for development and are given very clear advice on how to improve the impact of their teaching on pupils' learning. Personal action plans link to actions to effect these improvements, for example: coaching from the headteacher; access to development opportunities provided through the Trust arrangements; and regular programmed time for phase teachers and teaching assistants to plan together and moderate pupils' work. Staff value training and development opportunities and feedback on their performance. This approach is building capacity in the classroom well. More could be made of good and outstanding teaching to develop collective practice.

The headteacher has introduced greater rigour to tracking pupils' progress. This has been a significant development since the last inspection. Assessment information is used at formal meetings with class teachers to discuss progress at pupil level, in different subjects and between year groups and key stages. This systematic approach underpins the school's thorough evaluation of what is working well and where further work is needed.

In lessons, teachers' planning takes into account the different needs of individuals and tasks are devised to accommodate these. Inspectors saw some good challenge in mathematics and English lessons. The school's agreed strategies to support learning are applied in all lessons. Teachers' skills and confidence in using these to promote good progress in every lesson are improving, but at a variable rate. Training has allowed staff to manage pupils' social and emotional needs, their special educational needs and/or disabilities and behaviour more effectively. This is helping to move learning on more rapidly. In several of the lessons observed during this monitoring inspection, pupils' enthusiasm helped maintain a brisk pace as they participated well in paired and group work. Raised expectations have improved the presentation of pupils' work and the consistency and quality of marking are developing well.

The benefit of a School Improvement Partner linked to other primary schools in the Trust has been valuable in helping the school identify appropriate staff development opportunities beyond the school. The governing body has acted quickly to endorse the well-considered plans for restructure of leadership roles and the process of new appointments is well underway. Developments since the last inspection remain work in progress. However, the improvements in provision and outcomes for mathematics, developments in supporting writing, a sharper focus on individual learning needs and robust monitoring and strategic planning all contribute to the increasing momentum of change.

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

Cathryn Kirby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 16 and 17 September 2009.

- Raise standards in writing and mathematics by:
 - improving how pupils present their written work
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length both in English and in other subjects
 - giving pupils more opportunities to undertake written problems and problem-solving activities in mathematics.

- Increase the proportion of good teaching by:
 - ensuring that expectations for all pupils are high and that planning and work is more closely matched to the needs of more-able learners
 - increasing the pace of teaching in lessons
 - ensuring that school policies on managing behaviour are consistently applied.

- Strengthen procedures for the monitoring of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that monitoring of the quality of lessons also takes into account the progress made by different groups of pupils
 - making sure that teachers are given specific advice on how to improve their practice and that this is checked up on by future monitoring.

- Develop assessment procedures by:
 - ensuring a consistent whole-school approach to marking which gives pupils clear guidance on the next steps to take in order to improve their work
 - expanding existing systems so that the school can track more easily the progress made by individual pupils and groups of pupils.