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Mrs Susan Jones
Headteacher
Pilgrim Primary School
Oxford Street
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Dear Mrs Jones

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Pilgrim Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 3 February 2011, for the time your deputy headteacher gave to my phone discussions and for the information he provided before and during the inspection. I would be grateful if you could thank the members of staff, governors and the group of pupils who met with me.

The school has experienced a number of changes since the previous inspection. One class teacher has left the school and another has taken maternity leave. Both have been replaced. Three part-time teachers have been appointed to provide release time for the deputy headteacher and to run national programmes of individual tuition for English and mathematics. Five new governors have been appointed to enlarge the governing body and replace those who have left. The number of pupils on roll has also increased.

As a result of the inspection on 11–12 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 satisfactory progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection and an increasing proportion now reach the expected levels. In 2010, the overall attainment of pupils remained low in some subjects and year groups. This generally reflected the significant proportion of pupils who had entered and left the school, many of whom arrived at the early stages of speaking English. The attainment of pupils who had

remained at the school for all of their education was closer to the national average. The school's predictions for 2011 indicate the attainment of pupils in Year 6 will be broadly in line with the national average. This presents a similar picture to the school's internal assessments for the 2010 cohort. Whilst the most recent assessment information confirms an improving trend, pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics has yet to increase by at least 10% in each year group. In 2010, pupils made expected progress and a significant proportion of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, made better-than-expected progress. The school's most recent assessment information shows that the vast majority of pupils are on track to make at least expected progress by the time they leave school.

The school has implemented a range of approaches to raise standards in writing and mathematics. The well-established systems for setting and reviewing targets have made a significant contribution to recent improvements. Pupils spoken to during the inspection knew their targets and were observed assessing each other or being assessed by adults as part of the twice-weekly early morning sessions. The recently implemented programmes of individual teaching for specific pupils who are at risk of falling behind are also making a difference. The parenting support adviser and learning mentor provide homework advice to parents and carers, and support pupils whose circumstances may affect their learning and progress. The curriculum has been further developed since the previous inspection to provide meaningful opportunities for pupils to apply writing and mathematical skills in other subjects. Literacy books show a wide range of purposes for writing and provide pupils with opportunities to assess their learning against success criteria. Classroom displays are used to good effect to document the writing process, display high quality examples and celebrate individual achievements. Pupils spoken to during the inspection reported they enjoy writing and applying their mathematical skills to solve problems in other subjects. However, on occasions, they are not sufficiently clear about the specific mathematical skills being used when undertaking a science investigation.

Evidence from observing pupils' learning in a sample of lessons and books supports the school's view that the quality of teaching has improved. The school has made a determined effort to improve the consistency of lessons through staff training and rigorous monitoring. The majority of lessons seen during the inspection were judged to be good. Questioning was used to good effect and tasks were usually well matched to pupils' needs and abilities which resulted in an appropriate level of challenge. For example, Year 1 pupils were provided with a range of instructions to follow that were progressively more complex and demanding. High-quality relationships, good behaviour and positive attitudes towards learning were common features of lessons seen. As a result, pupils work effectively with others in pairs and small groups. The school's concerted efforts to improve the quality of marking are recognised by pupils. Feedback seen in a sample of books was generally detailed and informed pupils how work could be improved. Some aspects of lessons are not firmly embedded. While adults generally provide skilful and sensitive support, at times they are not utilised as well as they should be. Pupils' levels of independence

are generally high, but this does not always result in them taking greater responsibility for their learning in lessons; this was particularly the case with regard to more able pupils.

Since the previous inspection, the school has installed a substantial all-weather shelter. This provides a spacious learning area accessed through a number of classrooms. During the inspection, the facility was fully utilised by children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and provided free-flow access to a range of outdoor learning activities. Children demonstrated high levels of independence and socialised well when choosing activities, sharing and taking turns. Occasionally, opportunities to reinforce specific learning intentions were missed because of the absence of visual prompts or the timely intervention of adults.

The role of middle leaders, several of whom were newly appointed at the time of the previous inspection, has been consolidated and developed well. The school has extended the membership of the senior leadership team and provided new members with access to the support of an executive coach. Middle leaders report they play an increasing role in raising expectations and driving improvements by delivering training, monitoring the quality of lessons and participating in meetings with class teachers to review the progress that pupils have made. The most recent subject reports provide an informative and insightful commentary on pupils' attainment and progress, the quality of provision and the priorities for improvement. While systems to track the attainment and progress of pupils are detailed and well maintained, the frequency with which pupils enter and leave the school places additional demands on leaders. The school recognises that the current systems do not provide easy access to key strategic information. As a result, leaders do not always have a clear overview of the emerging trends.

The governing body has been strengthened by new appointments with a broad range of skills and experience. It has utilised training from the local authority to increase accountability and provide a greater level of challenge. Monitoring systems have been sharpened. For example, a set of relevant prompts and questions are now provided on 'governor open days' to focus the attention of governors when visiting lessons or talking with staff and pupils. These improvements demonstrate the school has greater capacity to sustain its progress towards addressing the key issues.

The school has made good use of external support, including that provided through the local authority. The school speaks highly of the local authority managed intervention programmes in reading and mathematics, and the impact they are having on increasing the proportion of pupils who reach the expected levels. The school has also engaged an independent consultant to support them in developing creativity in mathematics. A number of pupils spoken to during the inspection commented positively on the practical opportunities provided to apply their mathematical skills.

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 Hancock

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Increase the number of pupils who attain and exceed average standards in writing and mathematics by at least ten percentage points in each of the next two years in all year groups.
- Ensure teaching in the majority of lessons is good or better in all classes and that teachers consistently:
 - match work to the full range of abilities so that all pupils, but particularly those who are more able, are consistently challenged and extended in their learning
 - provide detailed feedback to explain how pupils can improve
 - ensure classrooms contain examples of high quality writing and clear guidance on how to improve writing.
- Provide an all-weather outdoor shelter in the Early Years Foundation Stage to extend the range of play and learning experiences and opportunities for independent free flow in and out of doors.