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Mr Simon Hawley
Colham Manor Primary School
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Dear Mr Hawley

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Colham Manor Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when we inspected your school on 21 October 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on our thanks to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, the consultant headteacher, all leaders who attended meetings, your staff and the pupils.

Your appointment as the new headteacher began in September 2010 following a period as acting headteacher. The local authority seconded one of its principal officers as a consultant headteacher, working closely with you as the then acting headteacher. There are two acting deputy headteachers and a deputy headteacher who is on maternity leave. Two newly qualified teachers joined the school in September 2010 and several teachers have left the school since the last inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 2–3 March 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 inadequate progress in making improvements and inadequate progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The previous inspection report indicated that standards were beginning to improve but this has not been sustained. Standards since 2006 have been significantly below that found nationally in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Unvalidated test results for 2010 show a further fall at Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. Data for Key Stage 2 show that the proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 and Level 5 in



English is also lower than in 2009. While there is a 2% rise in the percentage of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 in mathematics, and a 5% rise in mathematics at Level 4, the school's results remain significantly below those found nationally. Throughout the school standards in writing are exceptionally low. This is severely limiting progress in English and leaders are rightly targeting this as an urgent priority.

Overall, pupils' achievement has worsened since the last inspection and progress is not good enough. Too many pupils are underachieving and not making the progress they are capable of despite some improvement in progress in Years 5 and 6. For the school to attain just broadly average standards by the time pupils are age eleven, pupils will need to make significant gains through good and outstanding progress. Outcomes for groups of pupils are highly variable and the attainment and progress of girls, Black African pupils and White British pupils is weak. Progress of a few pupils is hampered by persistent absence and overall attendance is low. Attendance for this half term is however showing improvement when compared to the same period in 2009.

The quality of teaching is starting to improve but there is too much inconsistency. In Year 1 lessons do not provide sufficient challenge or carefully structured learning to help all pupils make good progress as they start Key Stage 1. In Year 3 the quality of lessons is also highly variable. From Year 1 through to Year 6 pupils receive a mixture of inadequate, satisfactory and some good or outstanding teaching. The proportion of good or outstanding teaching remains too low and is not sufficient to eradicate stubborn trends of low attainment. The headteacher has raised expectations of staff and regular teaching observations are beginning to sharpen classroom practice. Feedback from observations is occasionally focused too much on teaching methods and lacks penetrating insight about how to quickly accelerate learning. When teaching is securely good it is underpinned by the teacher's confidence in using assessment data to plan learning matched to the needs of pupils. Good teaching seen during the inspection had lively pace, was challenging for pupils in asking them to solve problems with thought-provoking analysis, effective use of learning resources and good discussion. The careful matching of work to pupils' levels of ability through effective use of different worksheets, groupings at tables and by varying time allowed for pieces of work helped pupils to progress. Pupils in these lessons knew how the work linked to their targets and most made at least satisfactory progress and a few of the more able pupils made good progress. Behaviour is good and conducive to learning. When teaching is only just satisfactory, pace falters, pupils become inattentive because they are not given work to stretch their ability or sustain their interest.

Marking is improving and a small minority of pupils can articulate how next step comments guide them to know what to improve, how and why. The best marking, such as in English, has detailed comments, and pupils regularly respond to these comments on post-it notes, helping teachers understand pupils' responses to the marking. This supports better teacher-pupil dialogue and accelerates progress.



However, inconsistencies in marking remain. The majority of pupils do not understand how feedback links to their targets. Pupils know day-to-day targets but there is no use of national curriculum levels, limiting knowledge of their current level of achievement or where they are aiming to get to. Occasionally marking only emphasises the positive and does not give points for improvement.

The headteacher has a firm understanding of what needs to improve and why the pace of change needs to be rapidly increased. He is not complacent and has established a sound system for tracking pupil progress. Staff now have quick access to performance data per class and broken down across the school by pupil groupings. Even so, a gap exists between the school being data-rich and actual classroom practice. There are too many instances where work does not take into account what the data are saying about each pupil. Many new initiatives, including a refined data system, tighter roles for leaders and a cycle of teaching observations, are embryonic and have not had demonstrable impact on low attainment. Middle leaders are increasingly involved in school evaluation and target setting but this is very recent. In-service training and coaching of middle leaders is supporting their roles in leading core subjects but the impact of their work in pupil progress meetings and in holding teachers to account is just starting to emerge. Until recently the governing body have not held the school to account for year-on-year low standards and have not been demanding enough in knowing how the school is improving. Leaders have not been quick enough to tackle inadequacies nor assess why targets have not been met.

The local authority has effectively supported the school through 18 months of difficult circumstances and this good support is valued highly. Support for improving teaching and a deeper understanding of different approaches to teaching numeracy and writing have been beneficial. Staff speak of clear guidance in helping them reflect on their work and determine professional development needs. The School Improvement Partner provides succinct reports which are forthright and ambitious for the school.

The inspection has raised very serious concerns. These will be considered by the appropriate Regional Director, Inspection Delivery, who will decide when the school will next be inspected.

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

Joanna Beckford-Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

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

- Ensure the quality of marking improves to match the best, so that pupils can benefit from more precise advice on how to improve.
- Raise standards by improving the quality of teaching and learning to that of the best, particularly the level of challenge for the more able pupils.
- Extend the capacity of leaders to manage their areas of responsibility through coaching and training.