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25 November 2010

Mrs Sarah Curley
Headteacher
Castle Hill Primary School
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Dear Mrs Curley

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Castle Hill Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 24 November 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also thank the governors, parents and carers who gave up their time to talk to me at short notice. In addition, I am also grateful to the pupils who shared their views about the school with me and explained their work in lessons.

As a result of the inspection on 23 April 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 improving steadily. Although the standards attained by pupils remain low, the gap between pupils' results in statutory assessment tests and national averages is narrowing. There has been a trend of broad improvement over the last three years. Carefully targeted interventions have had a positive impact on results. More pupils are reaching age-related expectations than in the past. This is particularly the case for the younger age groups where the legacy of previous underachievement is not so great.

Rates of pupils' progress are increasing from starting points that are well-below national expectations. For a minority of pupils, including those who do not attend school regularly, progress is less rapid, but there are also groups of pupils for whom progress is accelerating very quickly. Pupils' progress in different subjects varies

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from year to year but there are no significant differences between the progress of different groups of pupils overall. Over time, higher attaining pupils make as much progress as those who find learning more difficult and those who find themselves in challenging circumstances. The school has exceeded its 2010 targets for the proportion of pupils who make expected progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 in English.

Gains in pupils' progress have largely been achieved because the quality of teaching and learning has improved. Teaching assistants support pupils' learning well because of effective liaison with teachers. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They understand pupils' pastoral needs very well. They are gaining skills in assessing pupils' learning and using the tracking information provided by senior leaders to match tasks more closely to the needs of different pupils. However, teachers do not yet consistently use assessment information to set the levels of challenge and expectation high enough for all groups of pupils. Higher attaining pupils are not regularly provided with stimulating open-ended tasks to help them follow their own lines of enquiry. Teachers' marking is effective. It helps pupils to recognise what they have done well and what improvements are needed and pupils are given time to respond to the comments. Despite this, pupils are not clear of their targets because these are not consistently referred to during lessons. This is especially the case in numeracy.

Pupils make the best progress when they are working in small groups with adult intervention. However, the school has rightly identified the need to develop pupils' independent learning. Pupils are increasingly able to work independently because the learning objectives are shared with them and they are provided with appropriate resources. However, learning is not maximised because pupils are not always sure about the intended features of the best quality work, so that they cannot assess their own learning or that of their peers. In addition, they are not always provided with sufficient support in writing to enable them to record their increasingly high quality spoken responses to questions posed in tasks.

Curriculum developments are having a positive impact on pupils' enjoyment and achievement. The linking of subjects and the focus on key skills help pupils to see the relevance of their learning. Nevertheless, there are lost opportunities for pupils to embed their literacy and numeracy skills through the full range of lessons. The school has improved its engagement with parents and carers. They understand how to support their child's learning at home and they are increasingly aware of the need for good attendance. Both factors contribute to better rates of progress for pupils. Pupils' behaviour, attendance and social, moral, spiritual and cultural development are all improving. The trend towards encouraging pupils' independent learning is promoting their personal responsibility for making choices about their own learning. The opportunities provided for them to take responsibility in other aspects of the school include roles as monitors, members of the school council and in the gardening club, but pupils say they would like further opportunities.

Senior leaders have ensured that all staff share the vision for further improvement and the focus on continuing to raise standards. Staff work hard to adopt new strategies. They have responded to the effective support provided by the local authority. They are self-critical, want to move forward for the benefit of their pupils and are increasingly independent in identifying the next steps needed. This strengthening of capacity has been achieved because staff are involved in monitoring, evaluation, improvement planning and coaching. Senior leaders ensure that support and challenge go hand in hand and this builds staff confidence and expertise. The school has a very good understanding of its current effectiveness and what the next priorities should be.

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

Sonya Williamson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Ensure that more able pupils are given opportunities to develop the skills and abilities they need to make the best possible progress.
- Create more opportunities for all pupils to take positions of responsibility to help to improve their personal development.