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Mr D Baldwin
Headteacher
Holbeach Bank Primary School
Roman Bank
Holbeach Bank
Spalding
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Dear Mr Baldwin

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Holbeach Bank Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 2 February 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to the pupils and governors for their help during the inspection.

Since the last inspection, the number on roll has fallen to 57 but is not expected to fall further this year. A newly qualified teacher has replaced a member of staff who left the school at the end of last academic year. Pupils continue to be taught in three mixed-age classes, although Year 2 pupils now learn with Year 3 and 4 pupils rather than with Reception and Year 1. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities remains a little above the national average but varies considerably across the year groups. The deputy headteacher continues to share leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage with the Reception/Year 1 teacher.

The school has received good support with tackling the issues from the last inspection. The school's improvement partner makes regular visits to discuss the school's progress. She has provided support for improving teachers' assessments and completed observations of teaching and learning with senior leaders. The local authority has given guidance on improving provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, including developing the outdoor learning area. The school is currently working with a consultant to develop the curriculum by providing pupils with more investigative learning opportunities.

As a result of the inspection on 23 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 has improved since the last inspection. In 2010 pupils who left Year 6 made good progress from their starting points in Year 2. Almost all managed to make two levels progress in English and mathematics. Despite this, attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 remained below average, although good improvement was seen in the proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 in writing and Level 4 results in mathematics were above the national average. A majority of pupils in Years 2 and 6 who had special educational needs made good progress. A positive focus on raising boys' attainment, particularly in literacy, is beginning to make a difference. In Year 2 last year, attainment in boys' writing was close to the national average and boys' attainment in English is expected to be higher than girls in Year 6 this year.

Attendance is not as high as it was at the time of the last inspection and leaders acknowledge that they need to keep a closer check on the higher levels of absence of a small number of individual pupils.

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved well. Local authority support and enhanced leadership from within the school have helped staff tackle the issues identified at the last inspection. Class reorganisation, and placing Year 2 pupils in the middle class, has helped staff design a curriculum that better suits Reception and Year 1 pupils. Reception children now enjoy a good range of well-planned learning activities across all six areas of learning. The reorganisation of the indoor and outdoor learning environments provides children with a choice of many stimulating and challenging learning activities; the balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities is much more suitable. Improvements in the quality and accuracy of assessment have also been introduced. Outcomes at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2010 improved well from the previous year, although they remained below the local authority and national mean. Mid-year assessments for Reception children this year indicate that this improving trend will continue.

Improvements have also been introduced to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in the way in which lessons are planned and pupils' learning is assessed. Planning is much more sharply focused in response to the outcomes of teachers' assessments, and matched more precisely to the learning needs of individual pupils. Teachers now have a sharper understanding of how well pupils are doing and what they need to do to improve. Pupils are also involved more in evaluating their own responses. Initiatives such as 'Big Write' Fridays, and the introduction of a wider range of resources to stimulate pupils' interest and support transcription skills, have also helped strengthen provision and raise standards, particularly for boys and pupils who are more able. These improvements were evident in the good quality teaching observed during the monitoring inspection.

Support from senior leaders, through modelling lessons and observing and coaching colleagues, has strengthened the overall quality of teaching and learning; this good guidance is helping to develop the skills of new and less experienced members of staff. Leaders have drawn up a clearly focused development plan to bring about further improvements this year. The governing body keeps an eye on the improvements being made through the work of the standards and curriculum committee. Overall, the school's capacity to bring about further improvements is stronger than it was at the time of the last inspection.

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

Rob McKeown

Additional Inspector

Annex

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

Raise standards, particularly in writing by:

- making sure the regular assessment of pupils' work is always used to inform planning and teaching, so that lessons are always matched to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly for boys and the most able;
- making sure all teaching is as good as the best by sharing the good practice clearly evident in the school.

Provide more opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to be active learners and make choices and decisions through:

- providing a wider range of stimulating and challenging activities, more exploration and problem solving opportunities throughout the day
- redressing the imbalance in adult-led and child-initiated activities
- organising the classroom to ensure children in Reception always access the most appropriate curriculum for them.