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Mrs Judith Price  
Headteacher  
Dunalley Primary School  
West Drive  
Cheltenham  
Gloucestershire  
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Dear Mrs Price

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Dunalley Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 8 March 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. I would particularly like to thank the chair of governors and the school improvement partner who came into school to meet with me and the pupils who talked to me about life at Dunalley.

Since the inspection, an inclusion coordinator has been appointed and there has been a restructuring of the senior leadership team. A new chair of governors has been appointed.

As a result of the inspection on 12–13 October 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.

The most recent national tests of 2010 showed a continuing upward trend in the standards attained by the Year 6 pupils in English and mathematics. As pupil progress accelerates at a good pace, current standards throughout the school indicate that attainment is average and continuing to improve. Most pupils start Reception with skills that are below those found nationally and their experiences of early writing are well below age-related expectations. In the past, progress in writing has been inconsistent but new initiatives are positively influencing the way in which pupils write. For example, by systematically teaching the youngest pupils the sounds that letters and letter blends make, they demonstrate greater confidence in their writing because they can work out how to spell words. Throughout the school, there

has been a greater emphasis on using writing skills to promote learning in all subjects and this is particularly well reflected in the high quality history work. For instance, the newspaper reports created by Year 4 to announce the death of Henry the Eight, an imaginative range of vocabulary as pupils critically describe his opulent way of life. Promoting speaking and listening skills and developing story-making techniques have also motivated and enthused all the pupils' interest in using their writing skills. The school has successfully engaged parents and carers in workshops where they learn about how their children are taught to write. Careful planning with the private on-site nursery is also influencing the way in which the children consider themselves as writers and this is developing their confidence and self-esteem when they make marks with pens and pencils during their play.

By observing best practice in other classes within their own and at other local schools, there is now a shared understanding amongst teachers of what good learning should look like. Individual accountability for the learning and progress made by each pupil is clearly understood. This is demonstrated well by the thorough analysis of data which is collected from regular assessment tests and used to inform teacher planning and set targets for pupil improvement. Older pupils have detailed involvement in the target-setting process and refer to their challenging targets during lessons. They frequently assess their own work and then respond quickly to the clear feedback and improvement points suggested by their teacher. Year 6 pupils confidently relate their own levels of attainment to national benchmarks and this helps them work toward the higher levels in the standardised tests at the end of the year. However, younger pupils are less secure about their individual targets because feedback is not always directly linked to individual pieces of work in their books and this confuses them.

The pertinent training undertaken by subject leaders and key coordinators has played a significant role in school improvement. Working alongside senior leaders and external consultants to observe lessons and evaluate learning over time through book trawls, middle leaders' awareness of pupil progress has been heightened and this has enabled them to influence new developments. Smart use of data by middle leaders has enabled them to identify pupils who are not achieving as well as their peers. Specific ways to support individuals and small groups have been introduced into the classroom. Teaching assistants are now planning and working closely with the teachers and this ensures that there is full accountability for pupil progress. It also enables all the pupils to be fully included in all aspects of classroom learning. Past data indicated that boys did not do as well as the girls in English. By involving the boys in planning topics that interest them, increasing the proportion of books that interest them and introducing a more practical and visual approach to learning, the gender gap is set to decrease.

Through the work of a new committee which focuses on school improvement, the governing body demonstrate an active engagement in evaluating the strengths of the school, setting priorities for further improvement and challenging the senior leaders. By involvement with the daily life of the school, engagement with external

moderators and regular meetings with the headteacher, the chair of governors has a secure knowledge of the barriers to learning which the school has to overcome and has a good understanding of the key drivers for improvement.

Measured guidance from the school improvement partner has been used well to support the headteacher to develop a shared approach to school improvement, for instance using the information gained from teacher assessments to raise standards and set challenging targets. Working alongside a highly experienced external consultant has enabled the subject leaders and key coordinators to develop their skills when observing lessons, evaluating learning around the school and engaging in book sampling.

Pupils enjoy life at school and are confident that there is always someone they can turn to if they have a worry or concern. Behaviour is generally good, they are treated fairly and codes of conduct are well understood. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the exciting trips they go on to support their learning. Historical visits, such as to see the Tudor houses at Avoncroft and the Roman villa at Chedworth are firm favourites. Older pupils confirm that they know their targets for improvement and are confident that when their work is marked, the comments help them to move on in their learning.

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

Lorna Brackstone  
Her Majesty's Inspector

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2009.**

- Raise standards in writing throughout the school by ensuring that teachers plan writing tasks that consistently build on pupils' prior learning.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - providing opportunities for all teachers to learn from the best practice seen in Years 4 to 6
  - ensuring that all staff understand how to use information from assessment consistently in lessons
  - making better use of feedback, especially in marking, to show pupils how to improve.
- Develop leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - senior and middle leaders monitor and evaluate teaching and learning more effectively and are given more training in translating information from assessment into planning tasks to meet pupils' needs
  - governors evaluate the impact of aspects of the school's provision on pupils' outcomes so that they can get a better understanding of the cost effectiveness of their spending.