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10 March 2011

Mr Orgill
Headteacher
Hargate Primary School
Hargate Lane
West Bromwich
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Dear Mr Orgill

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

Thank you for the help which you, Mr Hipkiss and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 9 March 2011 and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the school improvement adviser, staff and pupils for taking the time to talk to me.

Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes at the school. The previous headteacher left in July 2010. You were appointed as headteacher and took up your post in September 2010. In February 2011, an Early Years Foundation Stage leader took up post and a clear staffing structure with appropriate accountability was put into place. The number on roll of deaf pupils has fallen, and the six who now attend are well integrated into the life of the school. A building programme is under way to provide a purpose-built information and communication technology suite to be used by both the school and community.

As a result of the inspection on 26–27 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 satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The school has demonstrated clearly that it is capable of addressing the issues identified in the last inspection. For example, attainment in mathematics has improved and school data show that standards reached in 2010 were broadly average. The mathematics leader has had a significant impact by ensuring that the mathematics curriculum is both practical and relevant to the pupils. 'Working walls' are used consistently across the school to support learning and there is an explicit

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focus on language and specific mathematical vocabulary. Staff are providing a greater level of challenge in lessons. All the mathematics teaching seen during the inspection was at least satisfactory and featured aspects of good practice. Senior leaders regularly monitor teaching and learning, feedback areas for improvement and so the proportion of good teaching is increasing. The consistent use of target setting is not fully developed and marking, particularly in mathematics, is variable. The senior leadership team and mathematics leader are aware of this and staff training has been organised for later in the term. The opportunities for pupils to use and explore mathematics across the curriculum are at an early stage. This will be tackled through the planned curriculum review later in the year.

The rate of pupils' progress is beginning to accelerate. This is evident in the school's tracking data, particularly in English and for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is because work is planned more carefully to meet individual needs. Also, class teachers use the sound-field system effectively to make sure the deaf pupils' needs are suitably met. Additionally, higher expectations are having a positive impact on pupils' progress. Staff are aware of the need for pupils to make more than expected progress in order to narrow the achievement gap. They are held to account half-termly for pupils' progress. Pupils in some classes still have insufficient opportunities to work and learn independently, but in a Year 3/4 class pupils were highly engaged, motivated and enthused by a collaborative activity using papier mâché to create a model of Mount Kilimanjaro.

The new headteacher has developed a shared ethos and culture of improvement. He is committed to, and models, distributed leadership. Since September 2010, he has reviewed the school improvement plan, created a smaller leadership team and devolved leadership across the staff team. He has a close working relationship with the deputy headteacher. The new staffing structure makes explicit the responsibilities and accountability of all leaders. There has been insufficient time to see a full impact of the leadership team in driving school improvements, but it can be seen in the higher expectations staff have for pupils. For example, staff are working hard to improve attendance rates. At the time of the inspection, they had improved to the national average and pupils were clearly keen to be on time to have a chance of winning the 'golden envelope,' one of the various initiatives used to encourage regular and timely attendance.

The school has received an appropriate level of support from the local authority. The school improvement adviser confirmed in his recent report that the school will continue to receive additional support from the local authority.

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
Linda Rockey
Her Majesty's Inspector

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Annex

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

- Raise standards in mathematics by:
 - increasing the level of challenge in lessons throughout the school
 - making better use of targets to accelerate progress
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use and explore mathematics across the curriculum.
- Accelerate pupils' progress throughout the school by:
 - increasing the proportion of lessons that are good or better
 - extending opportunities for pupils to learn independently and collaboratively
 - using lesson reviews more effectively to identify challenging next steps in learning.
- Strengthen and extend the role of senior leaders in initiating and driving specific school improvements.