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Mr P Talbot
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Talbot

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 10 March 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please extend my thanks to your staff, Chair of the Governing Body, and pupils for their helpful discussions and in making the day run smoothly.

Since the inspection, there have been some changes in staff and some reorganisation in the roles of middle leaders. There is now one assistant headteacher, rather than two, and middle leaders now have responsibilities for coordinating English, mathematics, information and communication technology and science. The head of the hearing impaired unit is also part of the middle leadership team. The substantial building and refurbishment works, which were in progress during the last inspection, have been completed.

As a result of the inspection on 8–9 July 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 school is making good progress in raising pupils' low levels of attainment, despite their low levels on entry, high incidence of special educational needs and/or disabilities, and an increasing proportion who are learning to speak English as an additional language. Results in the last national tests in 2010 for Year 6 pupils were the best for some time in mathematics, although this was not mirrored in their writing results. The school's information on pupils' progress indicates that the



percentage of those reaching the levels expected for their age is increasing, which is improving progress in Years 3 to 6. Although this sometimes varies between year groups, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those learning to speak English as an additional language, are making up ground in their levels of achievement. In lessons, pupils' rate of progress has improved as teachers are more adept at setting work at the right levels and ensuring the pace of learning within lessons remains good. Pupils' confidence and skills to write at length remain a weaker aspect of their learning, however. Recent initiatives, such as new computer-based learning activities and whole-school themed weeks on writing, are beginning to raise pupils' confidence levels. Pupils themselves say that these writing activities are more fun, while other pupils enthusiastically point to where they have succeeded in knowing where to put capital letters in sentences. Others say they like the challenge of knowing their times tables. Those pupils learning to speak English as an additional language benefit from translators within class activities which helps their learning keep pace with classmates. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from well-targeted support following clear identification of their difficulties and weaker areas of learning.

The school's regular monitoring has succeeded in improving the quality of teaching. Although the school recognises that there is still room to be more consistent, pupils are noticing the difference that higher quality teaching brings in day-to-day activities. Pupils are clear about what they are trying to learn and they enjoy activities which are often based upon 'real life' situations. This helps to enliven pupils' understanding. Working out timetables and journey times for local buses was a simple, but effective, approach seen during the visit. Pupils are clear about their learning targets and most can explain what they are and what level they need to reach to move their learning on. In some lessons, there is still scope to involve pupils more in their learning and to tailor the curriculum to make the best use of what the pupils know, understand and can do. Classrooms have a good variety of displays, although these sometimes vary in quality between classes. Examples of writing, for example, are sometimes displayed too high to be read easily by classmates or visitors. In others, there is a good variety of prompts and examples to help pupils solve mathematical problems or to help widen their written vocabulary. Pupils behave sensibly around the school and are happy to work together in pairs or small groups. Only when they are not fully engaged in their class work does the attention of some pupils wander.

The headteacher, supported well by senior leaders and the governing body, has reviewed the roles of middle managers to good effect. They have clear lines of responsibilities such as leading staff meetings, promoting subject development and in monitoring the progress of groups of pupils. More recently, this has moved to monitoring teaching, which is starting to provide more insight into those areas still needing to be improved. Revisions to the curriculum are also planned and middle managers are looking forward to their involvement in shaping innovations in the design of themes and topics.



Senior leaders have been successful at raising attendance rates and, although there is still room for improvement, particularly for some groups of pupils, the mix of approaches is extensive. These include class and individual incentives for pupils to attend, first day anonymous calling to parents and carers, and, when necessary, instituting legal action for those parents or carers who persistently fail to send their children to school regularly. The local authority provides effective support and a recently appointed adviser gives the school impartial scrutiny of its work and progress. There are also well-developed and effective links with other schools to help various aspects such as writing and reading. Links to the adjacent children's centre, as well as other professionals, are proving effective in aiding the school's efforts to ensure the quality of care for its pupils.

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

Kevin Hodge
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise standards, particularly in Key Stage 2, by ensuring that the pace of learning in lessons is more rapid and all groups of pupils are consistently challenged to make good progress.
- Develop further strategies in order to improve attendance.
- Develop the role of middle leaders so that they have an impact on raising standards and improving provision.