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14 March 2011

Mrs Thomas
Headteacher
Cambell Infants' School
Langley Crescent
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Essex
RM9 6TD

Dear Mrs Thomas

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Cambell Infants' School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 11 March 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. I would be grateful if you could also thank members of staff and the pupils.

There have been some changes to the school context since the last inspection. There has been re-structuring of the senior leadership team which now consists of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers acting as phase leaders. The size of the school has increased from three to four forms of entry in Years 1 and 2. There has been an increase in the Nursery from 39 to 52 equivalent full time places.

As a result of the inspection on 2-3 March 2010, 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.

Since the time of the last inspection, teacher assessments in 2010 show attainment continuing to rise in reading and mathematics with a slight dip in writing. The dip reflects the significantly below average percentage of pupils attaining level 3. Attainment in mathematics and reading are also below average at the level 3 threshold. Those pupils who speak English as an additional language perform better than those whose first language is English because of the good phonics programme the school provides. Those pupils with special educational needs also attain well



compared to their counterparts nationally because the school identifies their needs early. White British pupils attain least well but there is no significant underachievement evident. The school's tracking data show attainment to be broadly average but progress to be good considering the well below average starting points of the pupils.

A new tracking system introduced by the Early Years Foundation Stage leader has ensured that assessment data is now being used more effectively to plan future learning including the most able. Regular pupil progress meetings hold teachers more accountable for the progress their children make. Gaps in learning are identified and any underachievement is spotted early and tackled efficiently through a range of interventions. Focused observations are systematic and learning journeys are well recorded. More able pupils are catered for effectively, for example through the good use of teaching assistants to support their learning. As a result of improvements, planning for future learning is more rigorous and maps out each child's next steps. Parents are fully involved in their children's progress and many comments were positive about how much their children enjoyed school. Children are making better progress in reading and writing and the rate of progress is accelerating. A significant proportion of children enter the school with speech and language difficulties but by the time they leave Reception make good gains in their learning in communication, language and literacy.

The school is making good use of a variety of information, communication and technology (ICT) resources and the new ICT suite is almost ready for use. Teachers use visualisers and data projectors to enliven learning and to make it more meaningful. Pupils use laptop computers in the classroom across a variety of different subjects, for example, Year 2 pupils made simple slide shows in history and others recorded their instructional text in literacy. Despite these improvements, the programme of activities provided by the school is not yet consistently developing the computer skills of all pupils. The scheme of work has not been updated to keep abreast of current technology. The coordination of the subject has not been rigorous enough to tackle all the areas identified by the previous inspection. Although records are kept they are not yet analysed well enough to ensure that all pupils develop skills appropriate to their age.

Assessment is beginning to be used more effectively to plan lessons which promote accelerated learning for more able pupils. However, this is variable and does not always translate into practice. Sometimes, teachers spend too long talking to pupils which leaves the time for independent learning too short. As a result, the more able sometimes spend too long marking time and their progress slows. Occasionally, teaching assistants are not always used effectively enough to promote learning and are inactive for too long. There are examples of targeted questioning but the slow pace of the questioning sometimes limits the progress of the more able.

Attendance has improved and is now at average levels. The school has worked hard to reduce the level of persistent absence and the work of the Parent Support Adviser



is invaluable. A range of effective strategies are in place to raise level of attendance but also support given to some families has made a real difference. Good engagement with parents and carers on a one to one basis has boosted attendance significantly.

The headteacher and her senior and middle leadership teams, are developing increased capacity to drive forward improvement which is having a positive impact on many areas of the school's work. The school appreciates the valuable support the local authority provides and the help and challenge of the School Improvement Partner.

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

Glynis Bradley-Peat
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2010

- Increase the children's rates of progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - promoting more independent learning and tasks using assessment more effectively to plan learning for the children's next steps, especially for more able children
 - helping the children to make better progress in reading and writing.

- Improve the opportunities for children in ICT so that they develop skills appropriate for their age by:
 - making swift use of the recently expanded resources
 - planning a programme of activities that develop their computer skills
 - providing increased opportunities for pupils to use computers in different subjects
 - keeping records of their developing skills and building on these.

- Use assessment more effectively to plan work that matches pupils' needs more precisely, especially for the most able pupils.

- Improve rates of attendance by continuing to work with the local authority and fulfilling the current plan to improve attendance.