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18 March 2011

Mrs J Mockford
Headteacher
Torfield School
Croft Road
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Dear Mrs Mockford

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Torfield School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 17 March 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to staff, pupils and members of the governing body for their help.

As a result of the inspection on 16 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 their capacity for sustained improvement.

Although standards are significantly below average, achievement is good. From their exceptionally low starting points, throughout the school, all pupils make good progress towards the clear and challenging targets on their Individual Entitlement Plans. Younger pupils make an exceptionally good start and achieve outstandingly well, particularly in their speaking and social skills. All pupils now maintain a high level of self-esteem and dignity due to the excellent relationships they have with adults and the sensitive way in which their needs are met through one-to-one provision.

Carefully planned interventions are apparent in all teachers' planning. The school has created a very detailed and rigorous system so that teachers and leaders are able to track pupils' progress very accurately across a variety of complex needs. This improved progress can now be systematically demonstrated. There is good recording, clear target setting and reviews completed in a timely fashion with the

involvement of both education staff and speech and language therapists. Targets are set which relate both to the curriculum and to individual needs, and these are used with great precision to monitor progress and inform next steps in pupils' learning. Targets are discussed and reinforced regularly and pupils themselves are enabled to evaluate their own progress consistently.

The staff are skilled at forging positive relationships with the pupils, and this was reflected in pupils' good behaviour during lessons and their positive attitudes to learning. There are many strengths in the care, guidance and support that learners receive. The school's zealous approach to safeguarding ensures that pupils are safe, and feel safe, at all times.

This individual support underpins a curriculum which provides many rich creative experiences, and promotes learners' independence through the provision of opportunities to learn essential skills, cope with their developing world and enjoy their learning. The school's support to learners' families encourages young people to acquire independence. The curriculum is well built upon past good practice and incorporates many new initiatives since the last inspection that support learners in their progress through their understandable targets.

The senior leadership team has monitored teaching and learning rigorously, identified areas for improvement, and worked alongside colleagues in a variety of roles. This has brought about sharper planning for the specific needs of groups of pupils by gender and ability. Evidence from the monitoring visit, supported by the school's own monitoring, shows that teaching is typically good or better. A range of lessons was observed. Progress during these lessons for many pupils was good or outstanding. Teachers' planning is always based on the careful assessments of each pupil's individual needs. All lessons were managed well and demonstrated a highly attuned understanding of behaviour management strategies to ensure learning was not interrupted and all pupils could contribute to lessons. In the best, and almost all, lessons, teachers ensured that students were actively involved in the learning activities. There was a clear purpose, and a relevant context using real-life examples and personal experiences to reinforce learning. Very occasionally, the pace of learning was slower, some opportunities for learning were missed and classroom support staff were not used well. Teachers always give clear instructions and explanations, ensure pupils understand the lesson aims, and make particularly good use of signs and symbols to involve pupils and to make their meaning clear.

Leaders and managers show a strong determination to sustain improvement and this is reflected in performance across the school since the last inspection. It is particularly evident in the steps taken to improve the quality of teaching and assessment, and the consequent impact this is having on the learning and progress of the pupils. The headteacher's passion and vision are at the heart of this drive and her strategic leadership and vigour are shared by other managers and staff. The governing body now has a very clear understanding of its role and the challenges that face the school. Through guidance from the senior leaders, they have developed a full understanding of target setting and how the use of assessment

drives the improvements in pupils' progress. A set of planned actions have been taken, such as very focused lesson observations and visits related to specific items on the school development plan. As a result, members of the governing body have restructured their roles and responsibilities to link directly with the important actions for improvement, and consequently have a more clearly defined input into monitoring and evaluating the school's performance.

The school has made effective use of the good quality support from the local authority. Discussions with the School Improvement Partner have constantly focused senior leaders and the governing body governors on the task of raising standards. This has supported their appropriate actions and reinforced their good capacity for further improvement.

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

David Marshall
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Increase the number of lessons in which pupils make good or outstanding progress by:
 - streamlining the process of target setting so that short-term targets are clear and used by all concerned, including the pupils themselves, to challenge and support learning
 - ensuring that lesson objectives always make clear what pupils will learn, rather than what they will do.
- Extend the good practice already evident in some parts of the school by:
 - ensuring that the monitoring and evaluation of teaching is consistent at all levels and includes teachers' own evaluation of how well their lessons have had an impact upon pupils' learning.