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23 March 2011

Miss C Isaac
Headteacher
Galley Hill Primary School and Nursery
Galley Hill
Hemel Hempstead
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Dear Miss Isaac

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Galley Hill Primary School and Nursery

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 22 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 be grateful if you would also pass on my thanks to the pupils, staff and members of the governing body who met with us.

Since the last inspection, the governing body has appointed a permanent headteacher who started in the school in September 2010.

As a result of the inspection on 30 April 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 senior leadership team has taken decisive steps to build trust and confidence in the school. Weaknesses in teaching are being firmly addressed and good practice is being shared effectively across the school. Achievement is satisfactory but improving rapidly. Results in Year 6 in 2010 were broadly average with a marked improvement in mathematics from 2009. Leaders have rightly identified a weakness in writing, especially for boys, and this has been a key focus for improvement. In the current Year 6, the pupils are on track to exceed the overall attainment levels reached in 2010. Approximately three quarters of the year group are expected to reach Level 4 in English and mathematics, and over a third to exceed this level. Pupils' learning is accelerating quickly as a result of good teaching. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching by leaders indicate that learning is good or better in the great majority of lessons. Lessons observed during the inspection confirm this, including a few

September 2010



promoting outstanding progress. This improvement in provision since the time of the previous inspection is mirrored in the accelerated progress evident from the school's tracking information.

The challenge for different groups of pupils in lessons is good. Sharp improvement in writing, including for boys, has come about because leaders have pinpointed the actions needed to raise standards. These include much better use of targets in lessons by pupils and good opportunities for them to assess their own work. Teachers' good subject knowledge is being used to promote higher standards and there are many opportunities for the pupils to practise writing skills in different subjects. For example, pupils in Year 5 wrote stories linked to the theme of Aboriginal art to be used as a starting point for drawings and pictures. In Year 6, pupils made outstanding progress in persuasive writing, giving close attention to the development of more complex sentences and the use of adventurous vocabulary and compelling argument. However, on a few occasions pupils are held together in one group for too long and this slows learning, particularly for those who are most able.

Pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning are consistent features in lessons. Pupils work together confidently when assessing each other's work. When they are asked to discuss their ideas in lessons, there is typically a buzz of interest and both girls and boys are engaged in the task. In and around the school they are polite, helpful and demonstrate caring attitudes towards each other. Those spoken to said that they feel very safe in school and have great confidence that adults will help to sort out any issue that might arise.

Good progress has been made in strengthening links with parents and carers. Most responded positively to a recent survey and they have many opportunities to come into the school including 'open' classrooms, special assemblies and curriculum evenings. Regular communication is made through the use of texts and the school website. Pupils' home/school reading records are promoting good reading habits.

While good progress has been made in addressing all the areas identified in the last report, the attendance of pupils is only just satisfactory. This issue is being tackled with urgency including working closely with parents and carers of children who are persistently absent. The headteacher, other senior leaders and members of the governing body have a determination to strengthen provision and embed the improvement that has been made. The governing body provides a good level of support and challenge because it is systematically involved in evaluating the work of the school. The capacity to improve is being strengthened on several fronts.

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

Peter Clifton
Additional Inspector

September 2010



Annex

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

- Pursue higher achievement by extending the challenge for pupils in lessons and through the setting of targets.
- Develop consistently good teaching and learning by identifying and sharing good practice and pinpointing actions needed to raise standards.
- Ensure consistency across the school in promoting good behaviour and further develop pupils' sense of responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Strengthen the partnership with parents by providing continuity of relationships in the early years, and encouraging two-way communication.

