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Mr G Duggan
West Heath Primary School
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Dear Mr Duggan

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of West Heath Primary School

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 also like to thank your subject leaders for English and mathematics, the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body, and your pupils for their contributions to the inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 25-26 June 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.

Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. After improvements in attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2008 and 2009, standards fell in 2010. This was expected for a wide range of reasons. This year, attainment is set to rise to levels broadly in line with the national average in English and mathematics, as confirmed by the standards of work found in pupils' books and seen in lessons. This improvement stems from the satisfactory progress made so far in developing more rigorous systems for monitoring pupils' progress, better targeting of pupils identified as needing extra help, on-going work to enhance the skills of teachers, and pupils' improved attitudes towards learning. The reasons for the need to improve problem-solving, identified in the previous report, are pupils' lack of speed in recalling basic number facts, weak comprehension when reading, and lack of skills as independent learners. Until these underlying weaknesses are fully addressed in younger classes, teachers in Year 6 are rightly, focusing on providing pupils with the strategies needed to solve problems. This requires a rather directive approach. A longer-term solution, demonstrated well in lessons in the Year 4/5 class, is the provision of regular opportunities for pupils to discuss and then tackle open-ended investigations. These are effective in enabling



pupils to develop skills of independent reasoning and provide opportunities for them to justify and adapt their method through discussion.

The improvement of teaching is the highest priority identified by the school. This is reflected in the school's clear plan of action and the tenacious manner in which the headteacher ensures that teachers are increasingly held to account for the performance of their pupils. The wide range of measures put into place to improve teachers' skills is based securely on careful analysis of information gained from observations of lessons by senior staff. It is underpinned by the satisfactory impact of support in the training and development of teachers provided by the local authority. This improvement is necessary because the quality of teaching is too inconsistent, and there is not enough good teaching to accelerate pupils' progress. In some instances, teaching does too little to improve pupils' comprehension in English. This occurs when teachers do not place enough emphasis on discussing and explaining the vocabulary used during lessons. Consequently pupils do not fully understand what they are reading and writing. The system used to check on the progress made by pupils provides clear information and is being used in setting targets for pupils to achieve. It is particularly effective in Key Stage 2, but in Key Stage 1 it does not provide high enough benchmarks for pupils' progress.

A number of important changes are recent, and their full impact is yet to be seen. The school's 're-launch' in September 2010, with a new uniform and logo, designed to raise pupils' aspirations, is proving to be successful. There is a very strong focus on ensuring that the school's new logo: 'Believe-Achieve-Succeed', securely underpins all of its work. As part of the development of a new culture of learning teachers ensure that all pupils have a very clear understanding of precisely what they do well and what they need to do to move on to the next level in their learning. Consequently, teachers frequently refer to the National Curriculum levels of attainment in lessons and ensure that pupils' targets are closely matched to the criteria to be achieved in order to reach the next level. Pupils really appreciate the changes that have been made and comment positively about them. When asked what they liked best about the school, most of the pupils interviewed chose their lessons, and particularly mathematics. Typical of the comments made are: 'My lessons are really fun...the work that I have to do really makes me think.' The provision of challenges for more able pupils is now given greater priority through, for example, the 'Experience Journals' for self-motivated study and the investigative challenges for gifted and talented pupils in Year 6.

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

Mike Thompson
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise standards in mathematics by improving pupils' skills in using what they already know to solve problems in new situations.
- Ensure pupils, especially the more able, are always given work that challenges them effectively, in order to accelerate their progress.
- Make better use of assessment information to make sure all individuals and groups of pupils reach the targets set for them.