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Ms Rebecca King
Newton Primary School
Hall Lane
Alfreton
Derbyshire
DE55 5TL

Dear Ms King

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Newton Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Wednesday 30 March, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Thank you also to the governing body representatives who spoke with me. I would like particularly to thank the pupils for the enjoyable time I spent talking with them.

Since the school's last inspection there has been a change in leadership. A new headteacher took up post in September 2010.

As a result of the inspection on 6 November 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.

Over the last three years, attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has been broadly in line with national averages, although there has been a trend of underachievement for older pupils throughout this time, based on their prior attainment at Key Stage 1. Results of national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2010 show that attainment in English and mathematics fell sharply and were significantly below national averages. This gap in attainment with national figures reflects a severe legacy of underachievement for these pupils over time. Despite significant challenges and a period of instability, the school is now on a clear trajectory of improvement. Its recently reviewed procedures for assessment and tracking indicate that standards are rising so that end of key stage results in 2011 are likely to be broadly in line with national figures. Evidence from lesson observations confirms this upward trend.

Pupils' current work and school tracking data show that older pupils are making accelerated progress in lessons and over time. This improved progress is the result of better provision, more effective use of assessment and the impact of strong, strategic leadership.

Tracking of pupils' attainment and progress is becoming more detailed and focused on groups or individuals who are underachieving. Consequently, the numbers of these pupils are gradually reducing as underachievement is dealt with more quickly and more successfully by the support given to them. Teachers have been fully involved with the developments in assessment. Regular assessments are accurate and detailed and, consequently, teachers are able to set more accurate and challenging targets for pupils. Teachers generally plan lessons that reflect the range of pupils' abilities and there is a sharper awareness of the progress that pupils are making. Pupils' personal learning targets in English and mathematics are being used effectively. Discussion with pupils confirmed that these are supporting them in knowing the next steps in their learning.

A review of the curriculum has been undertaken to ensure a whole-school approach towards developing a more creative curriculum. There is improved use of information and communication technology (ICT), as well as a focus on learning in different contexts. The school is beginning to provide a curriculum which provides effective and imaginative opportunities for pupils' personal development and for the consolidation of their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. In the best lessons, teachers are inventive in their use of resources, including ICT, and skilfully engage all the pupils in active learning.

The headteacher has provided fresh momentum and a sharper focus for the school. Within a short time, she has made a positive impact on improving outcomes by raising the aspirations of pupils, staff and parents. There is a whole-school ethos of wanting to improve. Senior leaders and the governing body have an accurate picture and understanding of the school's strengths and its priorities for further improvement. School self-evaluation is accurate. Reports show that the school benefits from the challenge and support received from the regular visits made by the local authority School Improvement Partner.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the early identification of groups or individuals requiring further support or challenge by developing a rigorous whole-school assessment and tracking system.
- Improve the curriculum by ensuring more cross-curricular use of the school's information and communication technology resources.