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Mr P Brandreth
William Byrd School
Victoria Lane
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Dear Mr Brandreth

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of William Byrd School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 31 March 2011, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the staff who also spent time in conversation with me and to the pupils for being so friendly and helpful.

The basic characteristics of your school are very similar to those at the time of the previous inspection. However, because the school is expanding to a three-form entry school, it currently has three Reception classes. Staffing is now stable. The school has, up until now, been a City Challenge school.

As a result of the inspection on 17 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

good progress in making improvements

and

good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The school has come a long way since the previous inspection as a result of the headteacher's drive and determination, the commitment and hard work of the staff, and the good support of the local authority, City Challenge and members of the governing body. Leaders at all levels are now playing an effective role in raising attainment and accelerating pupils' progress.



In 2010, Year 6 pupils reached broadly average levels after a period of four years when attainment was consistently low. The percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics was also slightly higher than average in 2010. This year, pupils are predicted to once again exceed their challenging targets. The majority of pupils in every year group are on track to reach age-related expectations or above in reading, writing and mathematics. The exception is Year 2, who, although below national expectations, have made good progress from low starting points and are also on track to meet their challenging targets. Pupils in the current Year 6 are once again in line to reach average levels in English and possibly above in mathematics. Progress has also accelerated in all year groups with progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 moving from inadequate in previous years to good in 2010.

The headteacher's clear vision and passion for improvement is shared by the school community. Leadership and management are distributed across all levels of the school and, because there is such a high level of commitment and unity, this has given the school a powerful tool for improvement which has enabled it to build on its success. All teachers are held to account through pupils' progress meetings, where the school's accurate tracking system highlights any underperformance. Teachers set their pupils challenging targets. They keep a close check on pupils' progress and ensure that learning is tailored to individual needs. There is a high level of support for those pupils who have particular barriers to their learning. Consequently, all pupils, regardless of their gender, ability or ethnicity, continue to make good progress from starting points that are well below those expected. This concerted action to raise standards, based on the school's clear and accurate review of its performance, demonstrates the school's good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Robust systems and procedures for monitoring and evaluation, guided by accurate action plans and the strong input of school leaders, has rapidly improved the quality of teaching and learning so that it is now good overall. This has, in turn, driven up attainment and accelerated pupils' progress. Although a few inconsistencies related to the quality of marking still exist, it, too, is good overall and pupils find that the next steps that their teachers give them help them to improve their work. Teachers know their pupils well and use good-quality planning to make sure that tasks match pupils' individual learning needs. Well-planned interventions close any learning gaps so that pupils keep on track to meet their targets. Pupils say the challenge is just right and know that they have improved as a result of the way they have been taught. Teachers have high expectations and are skilful in their use of assessment for learning in lessons. They listen to pupils' responses and analyse them in order to find out what they know and can do. Pupils say they want to improve and try their hardest. Teachers use regular checks on pupils' learning to find out where pupils' misconceptions lie so that teaching can be targeted more effectively and pupils can continue to make good progress. Opportunities for independent learning are a regular feature in lessons. Teachers ensure that pupils' learning is secure through



regular consolidation and the provision of meaningful strategies such as rehearsing answers with a partner or devising a mnemonic to help them remember subject-specific language accurately. As a result, when they are given opportunities to work independently, pupils use their knowledge, skills and understanding to confidently take responsibility for their own learning.

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

Barbara Atcheson
Additional Inspector



Annex

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

- Use assessment information more effectively to accelerate progress across the school by:
 - setting work that matches the ability of pupils more closely
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to work independently.

- Raise attainment, especially in Key Stage 2, by ensuring that:
 - all teaching is good or better
 - staff show sufficiently high expectations of pupils
 - regular checks are made on pupils' learning throughout the lesson
 - marking is consistently good and helps pupils to know what they must do next to improve their work.