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Mr J Kreiselmeier
Headteacher
Folkestone Christ Church C of E Primary School
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Dear Mr Kreiselmeier

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Folkestone Christ Church C of E Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave me when I inspected your school on 29 March 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. I much appreciated your openness and willingness to work cooperatively with me and your helpful suggestions for ensuring the success of the visit.

Since the previous inspection, six newly qualified teachers have joined the school, replacing experienced staff who left. The upper junior team leader has been seconded to support another school and there is currently an acting team leader. A new assistant headteacher was appointed in September 2010, following a period of acting assistant headship after the departure of the previous substantive post holder to take up an advisory appointment.

As a result of the inspection on 20 January 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:

satisfactory progress in making improvements

and

satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Improvements to teaching are starting to have an impact on pupils' progress and attainment. In 2010, mathematics results improved from low to broadly average at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6. Reading and writing also improved from low to broadly average in Key Stage 1. The school's assessments, supported by the evidence seen in pupils' work during the visit, show that the current pupils are on target to sustain these improvements. Key Stage 2 English results in 2010 remained low. Nevertheless, even though not yet represented in end-of-key-stage results, there is evidence in pupils' work that improved teaching is helping pupils to increase their progress. They are more quickly learning to write proficiently in a range of styles. The school's assessments show a modest improvement in attainment for the current Year 6 pupils, compared to last year, but a more marked one for Year 5 and below. This indicates a more accelerated and consistent rate of progress as pupils proceed through the school, so that an important step is being taken towards reducing the deficit needing to be made up in Year 6.

Well-considered strategies are supporting teachers in becoming better at motivating pupils and using assessment to plan appropriate challenges for all. This was seen in a Year 5 literacy lesson, where higher attainers enjoyed the challenge of using pictures as a stimulus for improving sentences written by somebody else. The middle attainers had a more manageable, but still challenging, task and the lowest attainers were effectively supported to suggest worthwhile improvements. The school's leaders recognise that this is not yet fully consistent and are correctly continuing to work for further improvement. Pupils were well engaged in all lessons observed, for example when a Year 4 class thoroughly enjoyed writing poems about a book character, the Iron Man. The challenge of raising the overall quality of teaching to good was increased when experienced staff left to be replaced by newly qualified teachers. The school's monitoring records show that the challenge is being met, with the proportion of good teaching increasing in each half term during the current academic year.

Considerable support has been given to help teachers to use marking effectively to guide pupils on how to improve. The impact is being closely monitored to ensure that staff are putting this into practice. Pupil workbooks indicate that marking is a developing strength. In all classes where books were examined, teachers are making helpful comments about pupils' next steps. In some cases, they are doing this by asking questions and pupils are beginning to respond to these, although this is still at an early stage and yet to have full effect.

Resolute action has been taken to raise pupils' attendance, resulting in good improvement. Immediately after the last inspection, the school recognised that attendance had been well below an acceptable level for several years and appointed its own attendance officer. Steps to improve attendance have included guidance to raise parents' and carers' awareness of its importance and systematic procedures to follow up absence. As a result, persistent absence has been reduced each term and the attendance rate has quickly risen to an average level.

Several improvements have been made to provide more opportunities for pupils to learn about life in other communities. Pupils now use a conferencing programme to share information with children in several countries. The influx of Czech pupils has stimulated links with schools in the Czech Republic and Year 3 pupils communicate with a French school. A group of Nepalese children visited the school last year, as part of their stay in Britain. There have also been some improvements in links within the United Kingdom, including sharing information with pupils in Scotland and Northern Ireland, but more still needs to be done here to improve pupils' awareness and understanding of diversity.

The school has not made extensive use of local authority advisory services since the inspection. It has, however, been well involved in working with a local federation of schools, sharing ideas and strategies. The benefit has been seen in the improvements that have been made to teaching and marking. Joint activities have helped teachers to become more accurate in assessing pupils' work.

The headteacher has a clear and accurate awareness of the areas requiring improvement and is sharing this well with staff. Important improvements have been made in several areas and there is a resolute focus on those still requiring improvement. Monitoring is regular and rigorous – shown, for example, by the judgements made in the lesson observation files and the headteacher's evaluations during joint observations with the inspector. Although challenges remain, the improvements to attendance and teaching secured so far have been crucial steps towards raising attainment. The recent track record in bringing these about reflects positively on the school's growing capacity to sustain 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

George Rayner

Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Increase pupils' attendance so that it is in line with national averages.
- Raise standards and improve the rate of pupils' progress by ensuring that:
 - overall teaching is good and all lessons include activities that are sufficiently challenging and motivate all pupils to do as well as possible
 - all teachers provide pupils with sufficient information to enable them to know what steps to take to improve their work.
- Ensure that pupils have more opportunities to learn about life in communities elsewhere in the United Kingdom and in the wider world.