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Mrs J Holder
Headteacher
Whitehall Primary School
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London E4 6ES

Dear Mrs Holder

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 6 April 2011 and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass my thanks on to the staff and pupils for taking the time to talk to me.

As a result of the inspection on 24 and 25 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.

Over the past year, pupils' progress has speeded up a good deal. Although the school did not carry out national tests in 2010, teacher assessments at the end of Year 6 indicate that there was an improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching expected levels in English, and a more modest rise in mathematics. Overall attainment was broadly in line with national averages in English and mathematics. The value added to the pupils' learning by the school over the course of Key Stage 2 also increased and has successfully reversed a decline in 2009. Tracking of pupils' progress indicates that pupils' achievement is continuing to improve across the school. Pupils' progress is accelerating, particularly in writing, because of raised expectations and because of the increased opportunities for pupils to practise their skills. However, pupils' progress from Year 2 to Year 6 is not yet accelerating at a good enough rate to ensure all groups of pupils make consistently good progress and achieve their potential. Progress in mathematics has been rightly identified as requiring further improvement and there are suitable strategies in place to address this weakness.



The school has demonstrated clearly that it is capable of addressing the shortcomings identified in the last inspection. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of what still needs to be done to secure further improvement. Good monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are consolidating and sustaining effective practice. Where appropriate, members of the senior leadership team have delivered training to all staff, for example in regard to meeting the needs of new arrivals from abroad who speak English as an additional language. Additionally, good training is being provided to raise the quality of the small minority of teaching that is satisfactory to good and to increase the proportion that is better than good.

Observations in lessons during this inspection confirmed the senior leaders' judgements that teaching is generally of good quality. Teachers use a good range of visual materials to stimulate and motivate pupils, particularly in literacy lessons, so that pupils remain engaged throughout whole lessons. Effective use of talking in pairs and collaboratively in groups, supported by challenging tasks, ensures that learning proceeds at a suitable pace. Good deployment of teaching and support assistants ensures that barriers to learning are removed. There is some highly effective marking, for example, teachers setting challenges by posing questions, and pupils are keen to respond enthusiastically, taking responsibility for learning themselves. However, this improvement in the quality of teaching has yet to have a full effect in ensuring that pupils make consistently good progress, especially in mathematics. Senior leaders, supported by all staff, are diligent about improving punctuality and attendance. The school's own view, and this is supported by inspection findings, is that there is good improvement in these aspects because of strenuous efforts to engage both pupils and parents and carers. Overall attendance is rising, including for those few pupils who find it difficult to attend regularly, and is approaching the national average for primary schools.

The headteacher's good leadership underpins the school's improvements and senior leaders' capacity for sustaining the gains secured so far. Teachers have raised their expectations about what pupils can achieve and regular checks on how well pupils are making progress result in effective interventions to begin to deal with any underachievement. The success of specific programmes is analysed well, reflecting improvement in the use of data for different groups of pupils. Senior leaders recognise that the tracking system used to monitor pupils' progress needs updating to better reflect teachers' raised expectations. Local authority support, in partnership with the school, is helping to make improvements in English and mathematics and has helped to raise the attendance rate.

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

Dilip Kadodwala
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

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

- Improve the consistency of teaching and pupils' learning and progress by:
 - ensuring that all lessons are conducted at a suitable pace to engage pupils throughout the whole lesson
 - consolidating the approaches to teaching writing and giving pupils more opportunities to develop and practise their skills.

- Ensure that the school's data are used more extensively to analyse the success of specific programmes designed to boost the performance of different groups of pupils.

- Improve punctuality and raise the attendance of the few pupils who find it difficult to attend regularly.