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6 April 2011

Mrs Lisa Duncan
Poolsbrook Primary School
Cottage Close
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Dear Mrs Duncan

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 5 April 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 Chair of the Governing Body for meeting with me, and to the local authority's School Improvement Partner, who also made herself available. I would also like to thank the pupils, teachers and other adults observed during lessons.

I note that there have been some significant staff changes since the previous inspection, most notably your appointment to the position of headteacher from January 2010.

As a result of the inspection on 19 October 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.

Children begin at the school with skills below those normally expected for their age. The latest published data and the school's most recent assessment and tracking data indicate that pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. By the end of Year 6, pupils attain standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are slightly below national age-related expectations. Pupils' achievement is therefore satisfactory.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are making improved progress because the quality of teaching is improving. Teachers and other adults observe the children

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carefully during their activities and record observations to inform the assessment of their progress and to plan the next steps of learning. Children's progress during their time in the Nursery class is tracked carefully. However, the school's systems to track children's progress in detail from their starting points, through to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, are underdeveloped. Some improved links have been formed between the Nursery and Reception classes. For example, the teachers from the two classes now plan topics jointly, in order to share ideas and resources. However, the teachers do not have the opportunity to observe each other's work, meaning that opportunities to share good practice are missed. The school has been well supported by the local authority. An advanced skills teacher and the School Improvement Partner have been particularly effective in helping the school to improve both indoor and outdoor learning environments. As a result of these improvements, well organised role-play areas engage children effectively and, alongside the improved adult modelling of speaking, play a key role in helping children to better develop their speaking and listening skills.

All four classes were observed during the inspection. Observations of lessons indicate that the quality of teaching and learning are improving across the school. This is because teachers are making more effective use of day-to-day assessment information to pitch work more accurately to meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers' improved use of success criteria make it clear to different groups of pupils what is expected of them in each lesson. Pupils across the school are becoming increasingly engaged in the learning process and many are able to clearly articulate their learning and outline the next steps that they need to take in order to improve. However, the impact of these improvements have not had time to show through in the school's assessment and tracking data, and the data indicate that different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs or disabilities, make satisfactory progress. Teachers, including those with middle leadership responsibilities, do not frequently have opportunities to observe each other's teaching, and opportunities are missed to share good practice that exist in the school. Despite the strong and effective leadership of the new headteacher, the underdeveloped monitoring and evaluation systems in middle leadership mean that the school's capacity for sustained improvement is no better than satisfactory.

The school have carried out a community cohesion audit and an appropriate policy is now in place. A staff training day was held in order to raise the profile of community cohesion and develop their understanding of the concept of community cohesion. The training day was successful in meeting its aims. However, the governing body have not received sufficient training to enable them to understand their full responsibility in relation to promoting community cohesion. The school have taken steps to engage hard-to-reach parents, for example, through input from a family resource worker, to provide targeted behaviour management support in the home environment. Although the school has worked well to begin to develop community cohesion at a local level, pupils' experiences of the wider world have been insufficient. Other than a school visit to a mosque, pupils' first-hand contact and engagement with representatives from different cultures and with those from

different backgrounds and circumstances to their own have been very limited. The promotion of community cohesion therefore remains as a priority for the school.

The central record of suitability checks on staff was scrutinised during the inspection and fully meets the current government requirements.

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

Jeremy Spencer
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Ensure that all children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make consistently good progress by:
 - assessing the children more often when they are taking part in activities to check their development
 - creating stronger links between the Nursery and Reception classes so that good practice can be shared
 - planning more opportunities for children to develop their speaking and listening skills
 - fully exploiting the expert support and guidance offered by the local authority (LA).

- Improve the quality of learning in lessons so that progress is good by:
 - using assessment information to pitch work accurately to meet the needs of all pupils
 - ensuring that success criteria make it quite clear to different groups of pupils what is expected of them
 - sharing the good practice that exists in the school.

- Ensure that the school fully meets its duty to promote community cohesion by:
 - completing the policy and procedures necessary to promote community cohesion
 - ensuring that staff and governors are trained so that they are fully responsible for their part in promoting community cohesion
 - taking steps to engage the few parents who are hard to reach.