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Mrs J Adamson
Headteacher
Grindon Infant School
Gleneagles Road
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Dear Mrs Adamson

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Grindon Infant School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 6 April 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the governors, pupils and your School Improvement Partner for meeting with me.

Since the previous inspection there have been a considerable number of changes to the governing body including a new chair and vice-chair. There have also been changes in staffing and improvements to accommodation.

As a result of the inspection on 18 and 19 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 satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The school has worked effectively to tackle the weaknesses in leadership and management. School improvement planning processes are much better and ensure that all members of the school team contribute their views. The careful ongoing evaluation and communication of progress towards improvement targets works well. Leaders now respond quickly to address weaknesses. For example, an action plan was completed and implementation begun, straight after a review of the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is now a well-organised professional development programme, both for whole-school and individual members of staff. The initiative of all members of the school team to share a training day to identify the school's vision and the way to achieve it was particularly appreciated by staff. They feel that their contributions are valued and that they play an important part in developments. The strategy of including support staff in weekly teacher training is a valuable improvement. The particular needs of staff are met efficiently through the use of well-targeted local authority expertise for specific developments of classroom practice.

January 2011



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

A major improvement is the effectiveness of the governing body, which was judged inadequate. The new chair is determined to develop a well-focused team of governors that play a significant role in the school's work. Members of the governing body are keen to take up this challenge and extend their roles and responsibilities. For example, a governor's link with another school resulted in the provision of a training programme for improving behaviour. New governors have been quick to take advantage of training and to develop new skills. The half-termly school improvement committee, which monitors the work of the whole senior leadership team, is a valuable innovation. Governors are developing effective links with subject leaders and are beginning to extend monitoring strategies to classroom observations. Their involvement in staff training and regular meetings between the chair and the headteacher are extending their role in school improvement. School staff appreciate the increase in governor involvement, particularly in the daily life of the school.

There have been improvements in providing consistent challenge to match pupils' capabilities. National assessments for Year 2 pupils in 2010 showed a rise in attainment in reading and writing, with overall standards closer to average. Attainment of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities was slightly higher than average when compared with national benchmarks. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that more-able pupils are now making better progress with their writing. For example, they wrote very persuasive letters to the council about not cutting down some trees near school. However, the challenge in lessons is not yet consistent. In some lessons, teachers work closely with support staff, both in whole-class sessions and in group work. They set a good pace to learning, encourage pupils to make decisions and provide exciting and relevant activities. This results in all pupils making much better progress, enjoying their learning and settling to written work with confidence. In other lessons, the partnership across the teaching team is not as productive, the pace is slower and tasks are less interesting. The school has made a productive start in providing more stimulating topics for boosting pupils' basic skills. Staff are keen to extend the creative curriculum and the new half-termly themes balance each other effectively. The school is in the early stages of evaluating the impact on learning. Feedback to pupils is mixed. Where it is good, adults provide individuals with a clear understanding of how well they are achieving during the lessons. There is evidence of good marking of pupils' work, but comments tend to identify what has been done well, without informing pupils about how to improve.

There has been considerable improvement in behaviour. Staff appreciate the training that has been provided and systems are now consistent throughout the school. Pupils move sensibly around the school and settle well in lessons. They understand the importance of being kind to each other. They cooperate readily in pairs and groups when they are given the opportunity. Lunchtimes are civilized occasions and the improvements to the outdoor areas together with stimulating resources make playtimes harmonious and a time to develop physical and investigational skills. The school has implemented new strategies for improving attendance rates, which are moving closer to average. Pupils are keen to play their part in gaining the rewards for attendance each week. Not enough focus has been given to improving the rate of persistent absenteeism. The school has made inroads into extending

pupils' knowledge of the world beyond school and its multicultural nature but they are at an early stage of development.

The local authority provides good support for the school, both in long-term support and in the provision of specialists to carry out thorough reviews or to support individual members of staff. This is having a positive impact on the school's rate of 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

Mrs Margaret Shepherd
Additional inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 18 and 19 March 2010

- Improve the effectiveness of the leadership and management by:
 - ensuring greater clarity, decisiveness and speed in addressing any perceived weaknesses in the school
 - improving the professional development of staff so that they feel more valued and take a more proactive role in the school's development
 - ensuring that the governing body is rigorous in holding the school to account for its actions.

- Improve standards across the school by:
 - ensuring that pupils' work is consistently challenging for their capabilities
 - providing stimulating and diverse topics in lessons to boost basic skills and pupils' breadth of experience
 - providing consistently clear and helpful advice to pupils in improving their work and checking that any advice has been taken.

- Improve pupils' personal development by:
 - ensuring that behaviour is consistently well managed
 - devising new and effective ways to improve the levels of attendance
 - developing more quickly their knowledge of the world beyond school and its multi-cultural nature.