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14 Apr 2011

Mrs M Collinson
Headteacher
Biddick Hall Junior School
Chesterton Road
South Shields
Tyne and Wear
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Dear Mrs Collinson,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Biddick Hall Junior School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 April 2011. Thank you for the time you gave to our planning meeting and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the staff, pupils and members of the governing body who met with me.

Since the last inspection, a member of staff who was on maternity leave has returned to work, as has a member of staff who had experienced a period of long-term sickness. A newly-qualified teacher has been appointed. The school roll has declined slightly, partially as a result of the relocation of the unit which supported Key Stage 2 pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

As a result of the inspection on 4 and 5 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.

In 2010, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected levels in national tests at the end of Year 6 rose significantly to slightly above the national average in English and well above average in mathematics. Although the attainment of both boys and girls rose, girls' attainment continued to be higher than boys. Tracking data indicates that the school is likely to meet and even exceed its statutory targets this year, although it may not reach the same levels across all subjects as those attained in 2010. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals performed as well as their peers. Pupils' progress in 2010 accelerated quickly in both mathematics and English. Evidence from the school tracking data and through lesson observations indicates progress has been strengthened again this year. The attendance rate has improved since the last inspection and the number of pupils who are persistently absent has been reduced.

January 2011



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

As reported at the previous inspection, pupils continue to behave well, are friendly, courteous and respectful of one another and the adults in school. They are very keen to do well and enjoy most lessons. Pupils' understanding of faiths and cultures and the multicultural nature of Britain has been improved. Various methods have been used to enrich the curriculum but a key one has been the establishment of an effective partnership with a local school that has pupils from a more diverse range of backgrounds.

Lesson observations confirmed the school's self-evaluation of the strengths and areas for improvement in teaching and learning and that key improvements have been made. However, some records of lesson observations done by the school lack sufficient evaluation of the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding and tend to focus too much on teacher activity. More practical activities have been introduced into lessons, particularly in science, which stimulate pupils' interest and ensure they are more involved and better challenged by their work. Marking has been improved with the result that pupils are clearer about the quality of their work and what they need to do to improve. Sometimes, however, it is unclear what opportunities pupils are given to respond to the comments that teachers write on their work. There is better use of tracking information to identify pupils whose progress is a cause for concern and appropriate intervention is put in place where pupils' progress is not as expected. Teaching assistants work well to support teachers although sometimes their work is not monitored as well as it could be to measure its impact on academic progress.

The role of middle leaders has been strengthened. They make a more effective contribution to school improvement and the monitoring of levels of attainment and progress. The governing body continues to be extremely supportive of the school but could be more challenging and evaluative when measuring its success. The single central register of checks on staff meets current government requirements. The local authority has provided good support to the school, for example in its efforts to improve the quality of teaching and 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

Dr Andrew Johnson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 4th and 5th March 2010.

- Raise attainment, by 2011, by:
 - developing the range of learning activities that offer pupils exciting opportunities for practical and investigative activities, so that pupils are involved and challenged in lessons
 - ensuring that data are well used to develop teaching and learning, so that work is well matched to the needs of individual pupils
 - improving the consistency of marking, so that pupils are clear about the level of their work and what they need to do to improve it
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels rigorously monitor the impact on attainment of initiatives intended to improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum.

- Develop pupils' understanding of faiths and cultures and the multicultural nature of modern British society.