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Mr Mark Wilkes
Deputy headteacher
Highfields Primary School
Elder Lane
Burntwood
WS7 9BT

Dear Mr Wilkes

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

Thank you for the help which you and other staff gave when I inspected your school on 4 May 2011, for the time you gave to our discussions and for the information which was provided before and during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the pupils and to the Vice-chair of the Governing Body.

During my visit I noted several staff changes since the last inspection. In the absence of the substantive headteacher, the deputy headteacher has assumed responsibility for leading the school and a senior teacher is fulfilling many of the deputy headteacher's duties. An inclusion manager and subject leaders for mathematics, reading and writing have been appointed. Two new teachers have been appointed; one to a job share position and one to a full-time post. In addition, one part-time teacher has been appointed to a full-time post.

As a result of the inspection on 10 December 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 good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Attainment in English and mathematics improved in 2010, with the greater gains being in English, particularly writing. In mathematics, the proportion of pupils reaching age-related expectations rose and exceeded national averages. However, the more-able pupils achieved higher standards in English than in mathematics.

The quality of teaching has improved and observations made during this inspection found it to be good in most lessons. Consequently, pupils are now making faster

September 2010



progress and records indicate that the current Year 6 pupils are on track to reach standards in English and mathematics that are above age-related expectations by the time they leave. Nevertheless, while much has been done to tailor work more closely to the needs of the more-able pupils, there is still some inconsistency in teaching methods. Occasionally, pupils have to sit and listen to the teacher for too long. This means that the brighter pupils do not always make as much progress as they could in every lesson.

The school has detailed information about pupils' attainment and progress and is now making better use of this to plan lessons that build more effectively on prior learning. Pupils talk about how lessons have become more active and fun, explaining that, 'In the best lessons, there is more to do and we are more involved in our learning.' Improvements in the quality of marking, the use of individual targets and a whole-school approach to assessment mean that pupils now receive better feedback about how to improve their work. These improved assessment systems help subject leaders to monitor the effectiveness of the school's work, to hold teachers responsible for pupils' rates of progress and to determine which pupils need extra help. Assistance from the local authority has helped subject leaders in their roles. Additional support would help them to develop their skills in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning across the school.

Senior teachers and the governing body bring an increased level of challenge and support to the work of the school. There is pride in what has already been achieved, coupled with enthusiasm and drive to raise standards further. Along with the improved provision and outcomes, the strong sense of teamwork and shared purpose provides a clear indication that the school's capacity for sustained improvement has been strengthened.

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

Martin Pye
Lead Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to secure good progress by:
 - matching work closely to more able pupils' needs and abilities so that they are challenged well throughout lessons
 - making better use of progress data in writing and mathematics to plan effectively the next stage in pupils' learning.

- Sharpen school improvement by:
 - ensuring leaders use challenging targets rigorously to check the success of plans and pinpoint where further gains can be made
 - ensuring subject leaders take full responsibility for attainment and progress in their areas.

- Improve marking by:
 - ensuring pupils know precisely what they need to do to make their work better and so accelerate their rate of progress.