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12 May 2011

Mrs J Loveless
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Loveless

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 11 May 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 your staff, the Chair of Governors and the pupils and staff who made time to meet me.

Since the last inspection in October 2009, significant changes have taken place in terms of staffing and the structure of the school. A new deputy headteacher has been appointed, along with a full-time inclusion manager and family link worker. As a result of some of these appointments, the school now has a management team in place. In total, six new teachers have been appointed, four of whom are newly qualified teachers. Pupil mobility has continued to be higher than the national average.

As a result of the inspection on 7 and 8 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.

Since the last inspection children, continue to enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills well below those expected for their age, except in the area of using numbers as labels for counting, where they arrive with age expected skills. Currently children are on track to make good progress, although the progress made in physical development, creativity and knowledge and understanding of the world is slower



than in other areas. The school has already started to address this inconsistency between these areas of learning.

The pupils in Key Stage 1 joined this part of the school with skills below those expected for their age. Inspection evidence and school data indicate that many of these pupils are making good progress, such that the current Year 2 attainment is likely to be broadly average. This represents a significant improvement on previous years. This trend of general improvement was mirrored in the end of Year 6 examinations in 2010 where pupils reached broadly average attainment and made good progress. Current data in Key Stage 2 indicate that for the second consecutive year, pupils are on track to reach broadly average attainment. A growing number of pupils are making good progress in Year 6; however, over time, this represents satisfactory progress.

Internal data, lesson observations and book scrutinies indicate that the rate of progress as pupils move through the school, although improving, is still inconsistent in reading, writing and mathematics. Despite some inconsistencies in teaching and the high level of pupil mobility, there is a clear trend of improvement.

In many cases, progress is accelerating as a result of focused interventions, particularly in reading and writing. The introduction of 'Every Child is a Writer' (ECAW) has had a notable impact on the quality of writing, while in reading, intensive support has resulted in improvements to pupils' reading ages. Despite these improvements, achievement still remains satisfactory at this point for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The teaching sampled during the inspection was still satisfactory overall with pockets of good practice. In the strongest lessons, planning is detailed and clearly identifies the needs of all pupils. Tasks set are appropriate to challenge the more able pupils and meet the needs of individuals. Pupils are given a range of opportunities to develop their independence through discussions and the sharing of ideas and opinions. For example, in one mathematics lesson, pupils were able to talk to partners about how to solve problems and consider the appropriate methods to use. In some lessons, pupils are encouraged to assess their own learning both verbally and in their books. Where these good practices exist, pupils are engaged and eager to learn. However, this good practice is still not embedded across the whole school and between subjects. Work set in some lessons does not always meet the needs of individual pupils and the pace of learning is slow on occasions. During the introduction to lessons, teaching support assistants are not always used effectively to develop pupils' learning.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is a balance between teacher-led and child-initiated learning. Children's learning in the classroom is explored in the outside area and adult questioning helps to develop children's language skills.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel very safe. A full-time family link worker and the availability of a new community room have helped to strengthen relationships



and further improve channels of communication between the school and home. Pupils are congratulated for regular attendance through a variety of initiatives such as weekly and termly assemblies. Together these have led to an outstanding improvement in attendance from low to high. This in turn has had a direct impact on pupil progress and reflects pupils' growing eagerness and desire to learn.

The school's process and systems for tracking pupil progress and assessments have been refined significantly. Leaders at all levels, along with class teachers, are involved in regular progress meetings where those pupils in danger of underachieving are identified. The school data over the last two years have become more reliable as a result of intensive staff training on improving their ability to assess the levels at which pupils are working. The introduction of regular moderation meetings across the school and within year teams ensures that teachers are now clear and consistent in how they assess pupils. The introduction of 'assessing pupil progress' (APP) has helped teachers to set appropriate next steps to learning. This, along with improved marking and the setting of targets in English and numeracy, is beginning to have a positive impact on pupil outcomes. However, marking is stronger in literacy than in numeracy. This was also reflected in pupil discussions, where they are more confident about their current levels and in understanding their next steps to learning in literacy than in mathematics. The school are now considering how best to analyse the impact of additional interventions and the effects of high pupil mobility.

Pupils are beginning to have greater opportunities to develop their writing skills through the school's cross-curricular approach where subjects are linked together. This development has helped to reduce the use of worksheets in lessons. Opportunities now exist for pupils to use skills acquired in literacy lessons within the context of a theme. This provides pupils with meaningful opportunities to develop their writing skills. The school recognises that through its ongoing review of the curriculum, such opportunities could be extended further. A further improvement in this area has been the opportunity for pupils to write over a sustained period of time each week through the introduction of 'Big Write'.

The headteacher and the deputy headteacher have a strong grasp of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They have been effective in creating an environment in which pupils want to learn. One child stated, 'I enjoy lessons when I learn new things.' The school development plan accurately identifies the areas of development and has supported the progress made since the last inspection. The skills and experience within the new leadership team are variable but improving. The school has focused on growing, developing and establishing the leadership capacity of this new team. The headteacher has provided intensive training and guidance through joint lesson observations, modelling and regular training sessions.

The support from the local authority has been appropriate and particularly helpful since this September. This support has helped to develop consistent monitoring practices, greater understanding of the qualities of good teaching and learning and



improved provision for English and mathematics. Staff knowledge in mathematics, English and assessment has improved as a result of this work.

The challenge for the school is to now ensure that the rate of progress is accelerated even further so that achievement rises by improving the consistency in the quality of marking, teaching and learning. The school's sound capacity for improvement is underpinned by a shared desire amongst all staff to improve pupils' learning experiences and outcomes. To date, this has delivered satisfactory progress in the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection.

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

Susan Gadd HMI
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

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

- Raise standards in English and mathematics from Reception to Year 6, especially in writing, by:
 - providing more opportunities to develop writing skills in lessons across the curriculum
 - reducing the use of worksheets all across the school so that pupils have more opportunities to develop their independence
 - improving the level of challenge for the most able pupils
 - improving the rate of attendance.

- Improve the use of assessment information by:
 - ensuring that pupils of all abilities, particularly the most able, build on their prior attainment at a good rate in lessons
 - ensuring that pupils all through the school know how to reach the next steps for learning.