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Friday 1 October 2010

Mrs Jones
Parkside Primary School
Bradshaw Way
Stafford
ST16 1TH

Dear Mrs Jones

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Thursday 30 September 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Would you also pass on my thanks to all the children and staff who helped to make my visit so enjoyable and interesting.

Since the previous inspection, several areas of the school have been refurbished and the Years 2 and 3 classes have relocated to classrooms within the school, which were previously occupied by private nursery.

As a result of the inspection on 05 March 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.

Although attainment for Year 6 pupils in 2010 was lower than previous years, the progress which pupils made from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 showed an improvement. The leadership has a very clear understanding of the reasons for this. All pupils are closely tracked so that signs of slower than expected progress can be identified and appropriate interventions be put in place. There is evidence that pupils who are more able are making better progress than at the time of the inspection, but they are not yet reaching consistently higher levels at the end of Key Stage 2. The school's 'nurture group' is no longer running as a decision has been made to use the methodologies developed here throughout the school to support all pupils, rather than to have a standalone group for a small number of pupils. This is starting to have a positive impact on pupils' personal development.



The school has received a good level of support from the local authority, provided through its own advisers and colleagues from high performing schools in the local authority. The impact of this support has been particularly evident in mathematics where a 'calculations policy' has been introduced. This has placed problem solving at the centre of mathematics teaching and pupils are now using a range of strategies to approach their work. This is starting to improve attainment in mathematics, but more time is needed to see the impact of this work on pupils' progress over time. Teaching seen during the visit was variable. In some lessons, it was not clear what pupils were expected to learn from the activities and there were not enough opportunities for them to develop their ideas and skills or assess their learning. However, there have been impressive changes to the teaching methods in Years 4 and 5 where a skills based approach has been introduced. Pupils are now given some responsibility to choose their own work in lessons. An ethos, where sometimes getting stuck or making mistakes is an important part of learning, has been firmly established in this class. This has allowed pupils to develop their independence, take more risks and to challenge themselves in a safe and secure learning environment. They are also developing the skills to assess and discuss their own progress and learning.

The support which has been provided by the local authority has also enabled staff in the school to improve the accuracy of their assessment of pupils' levels. Systems are now beginning to emerge, which link teachers' ongoing assessments, with end of year targets. These are monitored on a half termly basis, so that early signs of underachievement can be identified. Teachers are now more confident in using the assessment data to set targets for pupils' improvement over time. Regular discussions take place in staff meetings about how pupils are progressing. This has promoted a conversation about learning throughout the school and has focused teachers' minds on starting to ensure that pupils' learning is the focus of their work. Individual targets are now set for pupils in the core subjects and the school is starting to extend this to other subjects, to provide more consistency across the curriculum. However, this development is in its early days and has not yet had an impact on pupils' learning.

Monitoring and evaluation systems in the school have improved since the inspection. The leadership team and subject co-ordinators undertake a range of activities to support this process. These include: learning walks, scrutiny of books, monitoring of planning and lesson observations. Together, these activities are now giving a robust overview of where there are strengths and which areas need to be developed. The data are also now refined enough to analyse the progress being made by individuals and different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school also analyses the variations in performance of boys and girls. The leadership is aware that there are differences in progress made by boys and girls. As a result there have been changes to some texts and resources in an effort to engage boys in their learning more effectively. Through these processes, and the improved understanding which they have of data, teachers are held more to account for the progress of all pupils in

their class. Regular discussions are held between the headteacher and teachers to focus on how individuals and groups of pupils are progressing.

The improved capacity for sustained improvement is the result of concerted efforts by the headteacher and leadership team and the clear vision and direction that they are developing to improve learning. The restructuring of parts of the school building has improved the learning environment. The information and communication technology (ICT) suite was installed the day before this visit and has yet to be used, while the new family learning room has also been a key factor in encouraging parents in to school to support their children's learning and is also used by local community groups.

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

David Muir
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise standards and improve achievement in mathematics by providing pupils with opportunities to use and apply their knowledge of number in problem-solving and investigative activities.
- Ensure that assessments are accurate and use the information to set challenging targets for all pupils, especially for the more able.
- Improve monitoring and evaluation procedures to check that pupils are working to their full potential and to ensure that teachers are held to account regarding their progress.