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24 September 2010

Mrs Lisa Wright
North Crescent Primary School
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Dear Mrs Wright

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 23 September 2010, for the time you and your deputy headteacher gave to our telephone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit.

When the school was last inspected, there was an acting headteacher and no deputy headteacher. You were appointed as headteacher in September 2009, and the deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2010. There have also been some other changes of teaching and support staff. As a result of this, and the recent change in the way in which subjects are organised, almost all subject leaders are new to their roles. Since the last inspection, the school has developed an Eco Centre which provides an outdoor learning area.

As a result of the inspection on 28 April 2009, the school was asked to:

- improve provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage, ensuring that it meets children's needs, is stimulating and involves them in initiating their own learning both inside and outside
- develop ways of reducing the incidence of unauthorised absence, particularly amongst the travelling community
- ensure all pupils have a good understanding of the quality of their work and what they should be achieving, and involve them in setting their own targets to accelerate progress.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made:

satisfactory progress in making improvements



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and

satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

As the last inspection report anticipated, standards fell in the Year 6 tests in 2009. They were especially low in science. Although science no longer forms part of the national assessments in Year 6, the school has responded to these poor results in its reorganisation of the curriculum around the areas of learning established in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The Eco Centre offers an impressive facility. Its development is also designed to boost pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world. Attainment in English and mathematics rose in 2010 and is likely to be within the broadly average range when comparative data is available. This is better than the picture in Key Stage 1, where assessments have been consistently the equivalent of around six months behind national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school has drawn well on the support of the local authority, which has provided detailed monitoring and tailored assistance to help improve provision. Members of the governing body have also been very actively involved in monitoring and their reports are perceptive in pinpointing areas for improvement. These have helped strengthen the school's capacity for improvement. Although much of the leadership is new, the school is better placed to build on what has been gained from internal and external monitoring now that the leadership arrangements are settled.

There is now a more consistent approach across the school to lesson planning and to the use, for example, of learning objectives at the start of lessons. Learning objectives are recorded in pupils' books in Key Stage 2 but not in Key Stage 1. This makes it difficult for Key Stage 1 pupils and their parents to decode marking that merely reports 'learning objectives met'. There has been a stronger focus on pupils' targets since the last inspection. Whole-class targets are prominently displayed in each class, but there remains variation in practice when it comes to translating these into 'next steps' for individual pupils. The inspection visit was at the start of the school year and so it is understandable that pupils did not all have individual targets for the term. However, their books from last year show that targets were not previously updated frequently enough, including by the pupils themselves.

Attendance remains low. There remain too many pupils of both traveller and non-traveller backgrounds with high rates of absence. The school has taken advice from the local authority on strategies to better promote attendance. Some have been followed but not all. For example, the school took the decision not to follow the local authority's advice to put a high-profile display on attendance in the lobby where it would be seen by parents. Although attendance is reported on frequently in newsletters, there is scope for further drawing parents' attention to the links between attainment and achievement, for example by highlighting individual pupils' good attendance rates when these correlate with high attainment.



It is in the Early Years Foundation Stage where improvement has been most marked. The school now provides a stimulating learning environment, both inside and out. There is an appropriate balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. Even at this early point in the year, the children show they have settled into orderly routines and they interact positively with adults and with each other. A notable strength of provision is the careful tracking of each child's progress and the detailed recording, through both written notes and photographs, in each child's 'Learning Diary'. Foundation Stage Profiles show children made appropriate progress last year, but the boys did markedly less well than the girls. It will be important to ensure that full use is made of activities to challenge and extend the boys, including in those aspects of communication, language and literacy which may be beyond their comfort zones. On the inspection visit, for example, there were many physical activities that interested and engaged the boys but few that encouraged story telling.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Selwyn Ward
Additional Inspector



Once the school has had 24 hours to report any factual inaccuracies, the post-visit letter is copied as appropriate to the following:

- Appropriate authority - chair of governors/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – except for academies
- For the Secretary of State use the following email address:
CausingConcern.schools@dcf.gov.uk)
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools

A copy with editing marked up should be forwarded to the:

Lead inspector

