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Mr G Allen  
Millhouse Junior School  
Tavistock Road  
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Dear Mr Allen

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Millhouse Junior School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 5 October 2010, for the time you gave to our discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. I would also like to thank your senior managers and the Chair of the Governing Body for their contributions to the inspection.

There have been significant staffing changes since the last inspection. From January 2009, the school was led and managed by the deputy headteacher, with the support of a temporary advisory headteacher. In April 2010 a temporary executive headteacher took over, with the support of two deputy headteachers. You then took up your appointment as substantive headteacher in September 2010. In addition, there have been six changes in teaching staff, including the teachers with leadership responsibility for English and mathematics.

As a result of the inspection on 11–12 February 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.

Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The school has made good progress in raising attainment in English and mathematics. Although pupils only make satisfactory gains in learning in lessons, progress is accelerated and is good overall because of the rigorous use made of effective systems that have been developed to monitor pupils' progress. This means that when individual pupils are identified as making too little progress, they are given extra help, both individually and in 'booster

September 2010



groups'. The results of the 2010 national tests show that the proportion of Year 6 pupils attaining the nationally expected level in English rose by nine percentage points, and was broadly in line with the national average. In mathematics, the proportion of pupils at this level was also in line with the national average following a 20 percentage point increase. However, too few pupils exceeded these levels, and therefore the school's overall results were below the national average. Current data, and work in pupils' books, show that pupils in Year 6 are on course to match this level of performance. The strong improvement in mathematics resulted from the high profile given to this subject during the previous school year. English continues to be a major focus, with a number of initiatives designed to improve pupils' writing. Techniques such as 'Big Writing' are helping to improve pupils' motivation and increasing their skills and knowledge. Additional initiatives, with similar aims, feature in each year group, such as 'Adopt an author' in Year 3 and 'Every child a writer' in Year 4. The school's strong focus on raising levels of literacy and numeracy has resulted in too little attention being given to science, and standards remain well below average. Progress in making improvements in this subject is inadequate.

The headteacher and senior managers know the strengths in teaching and learning and the areas requiring further improvement. Their judgement that teaching is securely satisfactory is borne out by the inspection. Satisfactory progress has been made in developing teachers' skills through good support from the local authority and a well-planned programme of on-going professional development. More lessons are now of good quality or contain a number of good features. Through the Improving Schools Programme (ISP), the school is ensuring that pupils clearly know what they are to learn and what they need to do to achieve the lesson's learning objectives. Teachers consistently manage their classes well, and in the lessons visited, pupils' behaviour was often good. Teachers plan their lessons carefully, but the work set for pupils who learn at different rates is not always matched well enough to what they already know. Too often all pupils have the same task with varying degrees of support rather than work pitched at different levels. The impact of this weakness is seen in the low numbers of pupils who exceed nationally expected levels of attainment. Teachers mark their pupils work regularly, but in many instances their marking is not useful in helping pupils to improve. This is because teachers do not check that pupils have responded to the comments that they have previously made.

A further factor that has contributed to improved progress, and demonstrates the impact made by leadership, has been the year-on-year rise in attendance. The latest data show that, for the first time in many years, attendance rates are at least average in all classes.

Satisfactory progress has been made in ensuring that staff, pupils, parents and governors are more actively involved in the process of school improvement. Middle leaders are developing the skills needed in order to take a strategic view of their subject areas and show greater understanding of their responsibilities for monitoring and evaluating the quality of education. As a result of the ISP, the governing body is better informed and is more skilled in holding the school to account for the progress

pupils make. Pupils say that they have a voice and play a useful role in the day-to-day life of the school. Parents have been surveyed in order to ascertain their views, and the school has responded satisfactorily to the issues raised by this consultation. A number of improvements have been made in the ways in which the school communicates with parents. These include a weekly parents' workshop run by the school's learning mentor.

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

Mike Thompson  
**Additional Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2009**

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science by making rigorous use of the systems for tracking pupils' progress to ensure that all pupils do as well as they can.
- Raise the quality of teaching to good or better by ensuring that lessons provide a good pace of learning, high expectations and sufficient challenge for all pupils.
- Improve leadership, management and governance by consistently using the monitoring and evaluation systems recently put into place, in order to accelerate further the rate at which the school improves.
- Ensure that all staff, governors, parents and pupils are fully involved in identifying what the school does well and where it can improve.