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19 May 2011

Mrs B Hull
Headteacher
Thornton Cleveleys Royles Brook Primary School
Marsh Road
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Dear Mrs Hull

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Thornton Cleveleys Royles Brook Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 18 May 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

There have been no significant contextual changes since the last inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 19 January 2010, 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.

Standards of attainment in writing have improved. In 2010, the proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching the expected Level 4 increased to above average. Over one third of pupils reached the higher Level 5 which is also above average. School assessment data suggest that fewer pupils are likely to gain Level 5 in 2011, but this is partly associated with the ability of the cohort and pupil mobility. However, standards in mathematics have declined. They were well below average in 2010 and school assessment data suggest that outcomes will be similar in 2011.

Teaching is improving and, while much remains satisfactory, there are good elements. Teachers in all classes are now providing more writing opportunities and encouraging pupils to produce a greater volume of work. This additional practice in developing writing skills is paying off, enabling the large majority to make at least satisfactory progress and in some cases good progress. Some opportunities to develop writing skills through other subjects, such as religious education, history and geography, are sought. However, there was little evidence of a similar approach for mathematics and in science books; for example, there were very few examples of mathematical skills being developed. Teachers have a clear

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understanding of the expectations of different National Curriculum levels of work and are now using this in planning their lesson objectives. Much work in English and mathematics is differentiated to match the different abilities in the class. Examples of annotations on planning records show that some teachers are adapting their planning on a day-by-day basis according to the progress made in individual lessons. While the pace of learning in lessons is often steady rather than rapid, there are examples of groups of pupils making better progress. On occasion, learning time is lost because it takes too long to deal with routine matters, such as locating mini whiteboards and organising ability groups. Marking is regular and teachers make good use of specific comments, praising aspects of work and providing clear targets for improvement. Targets are included in pupils' books and pupils are aware of these. The school has identified the need for more concrete examples to reinforce understanding of mathematical concepts and the lessons observed included some good practical opportunities. For example, the use of different types of scales when estimating and measuring mass, engaged pupils' interest. The competitive element, in terms of which estimate was closest, particularly appealed to boys. In another lesson about whether different 'nets' would form a cube, pupils were able to use plastic models to copy the nets and test their predictions. Following the installation of a new information and communication technology (ICT) system earlier this year, teachers are making increased use of ICT in lessons which helps to enhance and reinforce learning.

Strategies to improve writing have been wide-ranging and have included providing far more reading materials which appeal to all pupils. While writing strategies have been effective, the school was slow to recognise the need to address underachievement in mathematics. The development plan for 2010 to 2011 includes few references to mathematics. However, an action plan was devised in February 2011 and this is beginning to have some impact. The school assessment data suggest that more Year 6 pupils are on track to make the expected rate of progress during Key Stage 2 than in 2010 but there is still significant underachievement in many Key Stage 2 classes. Regular progress meetings with class teachers have been introduced to discuss actions to address individual pupil underachievement. At this stage there is still a fairly heavy reliance on interventions but the need to improve the overall quality of teaching further is recognised. There are regular observations to monitor the quality of teaching but records do not always provide specific targets for improvement which could be followed up in subsequent observations.

The school's community cohesion provision has been less of a priority than English and mathematics but some early work to bring about improvements has begun. The school has made links with a school in South Africa and this is helping pupils to begin to gain an understanding of the lives of children living in very different circumstances. Work to develop a deeper understanding of the diversity of British communities is at a very early stage of development.

The governing body is led by a highly capable chair but the majority of governors are relatively new to their posts. While much training has been undertaken, the governing body as a whole is not yet in a strong enough position to provide strategic direction to the school.

The local authority has provided appropriate support, mainly through the School Improvement Partner. It has also helped to identify local sources of support for help with developing writing and, more recently, locating an advanced skills teacher to assist with mathematics.

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

Ruth James
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 19 January 2010

- Take all necessary steps to ensure that teaching is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring that lesson objectives are always focused on developing pupils' learning
 - making effective use of information from the school's system of tracking pupils to plan work that is well matched to individual pupils' needs
 - ensuring that lessons move at a good pace
 - ensuring that pupils fully understand what they need to do to improve.

- Raise standards of attainment in writing, especially for the more-able pupils by:
 - giving pupils more challenging opportunities to use and develop their writing skills
 - providing clear pointers for improvement
 - ensuring that pupils take notice of the points made, thereby improving the quality of their work.

- Ensure that community cohesion provision is extended to develop effectively pupils' knowledge and understanding of communities away from the school and its immediate area.