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Mrs Nicola Tettmar
The Headteacher
Hart Plain Junior School
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Dear Mrs Tettmar

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Hart Plain Junior School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 May, 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 the pupils, parents, governors and colleagues who contributed.

The senior leadership team has changed slightly since the last inspection. There are now two assistant headteachers and no deputy headteacher.

As a result of the inspection on 19 and 20 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 good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Although the full impact of this has yet to be seen, staff and pupils understand that the focus is now very strongly upon learning and progress and on raising attainment. The school's method of tracking progress is now more rigorous and target setting is increasingly challenging and ambitious. The school has further developed its processes for evaluation, enabling staff to analyse progress and tackle areas of underachievement more swiftly. As one senior leader said, 'We have definitely become more analytical without taking the fun away for the children.' However, pupils have not yet felt the full benefit of these improvements and their attainment remains below the national average since the last inspection.



There is some variation in pupils' progress between different year and ability groups. The school acknowledges that while progress in English has been encouraging it has been less so in mathematics. A strong focus on providing more opportunities for pupils to develop and use their writing skills across the curriculum has paid dividends. Pupils of different year groups speak knowledgeably about their writing, are able to identify where they have improved and can show how their teacher has helped them to do so. Opportunities for pupils to apply a range of mathematical skills in different ways have been less extensive. However initiatives, such as the school bank run by pupils, are now broadening pupils' experience in this area.

The school has taken robust action to raise the quality of teaching. Teachers now more routinely make use of ongoing assessment to inform their planning so that delivery of lessons and activities are increasingly well tailored to pupils' needs and interests and the level of challenge has increased. As a result, pupils are engaged and enthusiastic. More careful analysis aids the identification of pupils who could do better and suitable arrangements, including targeted teaching, are now being made to better effect. Teachers, as well as pupils, are self-evaluative and have appreciated the opportunities they have had for focused continuing professional development as well as to observe and learn from one another. One teacher acknowledged the impact that this has made on her practice, saying, 'The difference between the teacher I was and the teacher I am now is immeasurable.' Learning support assistants, too, are developing their roles more strongly. They are employed to best effect when they use their detailed knowledge of the pupils to observe and contribute to assessment as well as to the delivery of the lessons. The senior leadership team is aware that improvements have not been consolidated in all areas but is rightly proud of the difference that better teaching is increasingly making to the pupils' experiences of school.

The positive ethos and culture of the school are now significantly underpinned by an improvement in opportunities which extend pupils' understanding of other cultures and lifestyles. Very well planned initiatives have provided pupils with opportunities to broaden their knowledge and understanding of their own community as well as that of others. Bus and train trips and membership of the Children's University serve to broaden many pupils' horizons and aspirations, while the chance to link with pupils in Uganda and buy pieces of the rainforest engage their interest in worlds that are very different from their own. Pupils, parents and carers speak enthusiastically about the 'learning logs' which have replaced traditional homework and encourage pupils to use their research and investigative skills to good effect. One parent summarised all such improvements as resulting in 'better manners, better behaviour, better work'.

The enthusiasm and drive of the headteacher are echoed by the senior leadership team and the staff. The school has made very good use of support from the local authority and other advisers as well as partner schools to widen its experience and skill base. The governing body has significantly changed its role and approach so that members not only provide support but also offer well-focused challenge. Good



systems are now in place to ensure that both strategic and statutory responsibilities are met and evaluated.

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

Anne Duffy
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Ensure that teaching improves so that most lessons are good or better, by:
 - providing more challenge for more able pupils
 - matching work more closely to pupils' needs, through incisive use of assessment.
- Raise attainment, particularly in writing and mathematics, by July 2010, by:
 - improving the consistency of progress across the school
 - giving pupils more opportunities to develop writing and numeracy skills across the curriculum.
- Improve pupils' understanding of other cultures and lifestyles, by developing links with wider national and international communities.