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Miss Claire Logan
Northfields Infants and Nursery School
Burley
Letchworth Garden City
SG6 4PT

Dear Miss Logan

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Northfields Infants and Nursery School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 17 May 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please thank the two governors who came in to discuss improvements and the pupils from Reception to Year 2 who met me at lunch time.

Senior leaders have not changed since the school was inspected but a considerable number of governors are new to their roles. Since the previous inspection in November 2009, long term sickness has been resolved and staffing is again stable.

As a result of the inspection on 26 November 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.

Pupils' attainment is developing satisfactorily because assessment is used more rigorously. In 2010, boys' and girls' attainment improved and was average. More able pupils' attainment improved significantly, especially in reading and writing. For example, one third of Year 2 pupils were assessed as working at above expected levels in reading. The pupils' achievement is improving satisfactorily and their progress seen in books and lessons is sound. Year 2 pupils successfully write stories using characters from famous paintings because resources are used imaginatively. In a good lesson observed in Year 2, pupils used their literacy skills well when they incorporated their research on dinosaurs into a presentation. At the same time, these pupils developed their information and communication technology (ICT) skills effectively when they inserted a new page into their presentation and added images



of dinosaurs. Year 1 pupils made satisfactory progress when they recognised the value of coins and wrote addition sums accurately as a result of secure practical work. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities continue to achieve well due to the effective use of individual education plans and very astute monitoring by the special educational needs coordinator.

Children continue to make good progress in Nursery and Reception classes due to the good use of resources and time. Children behave extremely well and have positive attitudes to learning as a result of high levels of care and guidance from staff. In a lesson seen, staff used time diligently to develop children's social skills so that they listened to others and took turns when sharing a healthy snack, as well as improving their numeracy skills. Routines are successfully established and questions are used methodically, for example to develop children's counting skills. Consequently, children's attainment is slightly above average by the end of Reception and they have achieved well from starting points which are in line with expectations. Occasionally, adults do not explain to children why they have been successful.

Teaching and learning are improving steadily. Teachers have successfully undertaken training to develop their skills in the teaching of literacy and this is evident in their higher expectations of more able pupils. Pupils' presentation skills are improving as a result of careful promotion of handwriting. Lesson planning is more thorough and learning objectives are displayed clearly on the board so pupils know what they are focusing on in each lesson. Occasionally, the criteria against which pupils will evaluate their achievements are too broad and so they are not always fully involved in checking on whether their work is totally successful. Marking is improving adequately but it does not consistently say why pupils have done well or refer to whether they have met their personal targets. This means that pupils do not have a deep enough understanding of the next steps to improve their work.

Monitoring and evaluation are developing satisfactorily and so the capacity to improve is strengthening appropriately. Senior leaders effectively ensure that all staff plan topics each term that will assist the school to raise pupils' attainment. Meetings to evaluate pupils' progress are carried out more methodically than at the time of the last inspection. A new system to track pupils' progress has been introduced. This is not being used effectively enough to create reports which outline the starting points of pupils and evaluate their progress using average points scores for attainment in each year group. This means that the governing body is not always fully involved in challenging the school's leadership. They are not totally clear about which year groups are progressing well and which groups of pupils are not achieving as successfully as expected. Safeguarding meets requirements because the school works successfully with other agencies, training for staff is up to date and the checks made on staff are recorded rigorously.

Local authority support is sound. This ensures that teaching and learning are monitored astutely. Advisers are helping the school to develop a more creative curriculum which uses resources, such as authors, imaginatively.

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

Jackie Cousins
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Ensure that all pupils attain as highly as they can by:
 - using assessment information more rigorously to ensure activities meet the range of pupils’ needs, especially the more able
 - planning activities that ensure day-by-day progression in learning
 - improving subject knowledge in the teaching of writing.

- Develop the consistency in the quality of teaching by:
 - raising teacher expectations in terms of the amount of work completed by pupils and their presentation
 - consistently involving pupils in knowing how to succeed in their work
 - ensuring marking follows the agreed policy, indicating clearly to pupils why work is good and the next steps of learning.

- Sharpen up monitoring and evaluation procedures by:
 - leaders checking on a weekly basis that agreed actions which focus sharply on raising attainment are acted upon by all staff
 - governors becoming more involved in challenging the leadership about pupils’ learning and progress.