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Mrs Davies
Stondon Lower School
Hillside Road
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Dear Mrs Davies

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Stondon Lower School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 25 May 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

Since the inspection of October 2009, a new extension has been added to the school building providing a Children's Centre, additional classrooms, including one equipped for teaching information and communication technology (ICT). Two teachers left the school and were replaced by two new appointments. In this small school it represents a significant turnover of teachers.

As a result of the inspection on 7 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 good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The attainment of the majority of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics is above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 4. In 2010, attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was significantly above average and a considerable improvement on the broadly average attainment of previous years. The above average attainment across the school in 2010 and 2011 reflects pupils' good progress. The 2010 Year 2 cohort, now Year 3 pupils, performed so well because they started Key Stage 1 above average. They were the first year group to have spent one whole year in Reception and also the first to benefit from the stable staffing now enjoyed by the whole school. The impact of good Early Years Foundation Stage provision and good teaching across the school is now raising attainment. Currently, pupils are in reach of challenging targets, showing they make

September 2010



good progress. Behaviour is good, attendance is high and pupils enjoy learning. Good attitudes to learning are encouraged by parents and learning is well supported at home.

Teaching is good and leaders are effective in embedding in teaching the qualities to promote good learning. A substantial programme of professional development, rigorous monitoring and successful appointments have improved teaching. Lessons are taught in a lively, engaging fashion and pupils are enthusiastically engaged in learning. They have many opportunities to be independent, use their initiative and learn in practical ways. A pair of Year 1 pupils worked out that they needed to measure the doorway to determine if the dimensions of their object would go through it, thus gaining a good understanding of 'bigger and smaller than'. Occasionally, the learning objectives teachers define for a lesson lack clarity, which causes a loss of focus. As a result, the teacher's work and pupils' efforts are, to an extent, less effective in promoting learning.

Subject leadership is well-established and makes a significant contribution to driving improvement. It widens the scope for effective leadership across the school, producing a cohesive team effort and increasing the school's capacity for improvement. Roles are clearly defined and effectively executed. Subject leaders have benefitted from a wide range of professional development opportunities such as 'Leading from the Middle' training and by courtesy of links with other schools. They monitor their subjects by observing teaching and they evaluate learning through analysis of data and scrutiny of pupils' work. Subject leaders produce good annual reports and action plans, linked to their performance management, which ensure that strengths are built upon and weaknesses tackled systematically.

Leaders have pursued a clear vision for a curriculum to stimulate pupils' enthusiasm for learning. This is developing successfully as a result of a well-coordinated team effort, and the curriculum has a positive impact on attainment and progress. Work and activities are linked together in a variety of topics which are planned to build upon learning in a well-ordered way. There is good emphasis on practical ways of learning, such as in the school's garden or on educational visits. The curriculum is clearly directed at promoting pupils' learning of basic skills. The opportunities for reading, writing, mathematics and ICT are all well planned to meet the needs of pupils of all capabilities.

The school's good progress since its last inspection is greatly assisted by the many partnerships with other schools. This has helped in broadening the curriculum, particularly through the school's sports partnership. Teachers have benefitted from

sharing with other schools good practice and holding moderation exercises to strengthen assessment.

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

Alan Lemon
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise the amount of good teaching by 20% by September 2010 by ensuring that:
 - staff make more consistent and accurate use of assessment in planning new work, especially in mathematics
 - the good practice already in the school is modelled as a positive example.
- Improve the skills of staff with subject leadership roles so that they develop a good level of competence in evaluating teaching and learning outcomes, are confident to take action on their findings and so increase rates of progress and levels of attainment further.
- Refine the curriculum so that it is more appealing to pupils, develops subject skills in a structured way and makes more effective links between subjects.