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30 May 2011

Mrs Pat Smart
Executive headteacher
Conway Primary School
Conway Road
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Dear Mrs Smart

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Conway Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 27 May 2011, 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 those pupils, parents and carers, members of the governing body and staff with whom I met. I also wish to thank the external financial consultant and the local authority (LA) finance officer for sharing their views with me.

Since the last inspection, there have been a number of changes to the school environment, including a new outdoor play area for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and a wildlife garden.

As a result of the inspection on 3 March 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 good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Pupils' achievement has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now good. The sustained upward trend in attainment in English and mathematics identified at the last inspection is continuing, as indicated by the school's own reliable tracking data. Pupils of all abilities are on course to meet, and some to exceed, their challenging targets in English and mathematics, with more pupils expected to gain the higher levels in their national tests. Good learning and progress were seen in lessons and in pupils' written work. Pupils are making good progress in literacy in Year 2, and in writing in all year groups, because teachers and teaching assistants are making better use of day-to-day assessment to support learning. In

September 2010



lessons, all staff provided continuous feedback to pupils on their progress, using pupils' knowledge and understanding to extend their learning further with skillful use of challenging questions. Staff clarified any misunderstandings and encouraged pupils to use examples of good writing displayed on learning walls as models of good practice. Marking consistently informs pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Middle leaders identify underachieving pupils in regular progress meetings. These pupils are then provided with additional support and intervention. As a result, they quickly catch up and make equally as good progress as their peers. Pupils' good behaviour is having a positive impact on their learning and progress in lessons as they focus on tasks and do their best. Lesson observations confirm the outcomes of monitoring by senior leaders and the School Improvement Partner, that there is a much higher proportion of good and better teaching throughout the school. This has occurred because outcomes of lesson observations are used to highlight strengths and support any weaknesses in teaching and there are also good opportunities for modelling best practice through, for example, paired teaching and joint planning within year groups.

Good progress has been made in strengthening the role of middle leaders. They are showing greater confidence and working more effectively as a team to drive improvements forward. Year group and phase leaders are held to account by senior leaders for individual pupils' performance at regular progress meetings. Middle leaders now have greater responsibility for ensuring consistency in the quality of teaching, in the use of assessment, and in the development and delivery of the curriculum within their year group. They hold regular meetings of their teams to review planning, scrutinise pupils' work, moderate the assessments of pupils' learning and set clear priorities for improvement. These are then fed into whole-school improvement. All middle leaders are working closely with their colleagues from the partner school to improve their practice. They are also receiving mentoring from senior leaders and training to further develop their understanding of whole-school strategic planning. This has led to the successful delivery of whole-school training by middle leaders in key aspects of the school's work to promote literacy and the use of information and communication technology.

The curriculum has improved well, with more opportunities for imaginative and creative learning. Staff are making good use of the new well-resourced outdoor play area for the Early Years Foundation Stage by providing a range of stimulating activities such as building houses for mini-beasts and modelling animals with play dough. Recently, children were given the opportunities to see a variety of animals, such as a lizard and an owl brought to the school by a visitor to stimulate their imaginations as they increased their knowledge and understanding of the world. A range of well-planned visits are used to stimulate learning across different subjects. These include trips to the Natural History Museum, to the Birmingham Repertory Company and to Blakesley Hall. The recent Year 6 geography visit to Malvern was used well to stimulate writing in designing a leaflet using persuasive writing in order to encourage families to visit. Subjects are also taught more imaginatively, as seen, for example, in a Year 2 literacy lesson, where boys' writing was stimulated in the

story of the *Enormous Crocodile*. The teacher used role play and a variety of resources, such as a toy crocodile in a mud bath, to stimulate enjoyment and pupils' good use of adjectives in sentence writing. Whole-school events, such as World Book Day, Science Week, Global Handwashing Day and Design Day, enrich pupils' learning. Clear links to apply literacy and numeracy in other subjects are identified in lesson planning. Pupils' cultural development is broadened through, for example, their artwork on inner cities, which is being displayed by the local council, their recent project on Islamic art and through sports coaching.

Although there is no written budget deficit recovery plan, the school has successfully reduced its budget deficit by almost a half and is on course to reduce this further. The local authority is providing satisfactory support for the school in monitoring this aspect and in helping the school to address the areas for improvement. Meetings have been held to review progress and the School Improvement Partner visits termly to review the school's work. The school continues to benefit from the hard federation arrangements with its outstanding neighbouring primary school under the excellent leadership of the executive headteacher, a national leader of education, who is supported well by her leadership team. These factors, together with the strengthening of middle leadership and good strategic oversight by members of the governing body, all of which have had a significant impact on pupils' achievements, means that the school is showing good progress in building its capacity to further improve.

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

Declan McCarthy
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2010

- Raise standards in English and mathematics, particularly in literacy in Year 2 and writing in all year groups, by:
 - improving the use of day-to-day assessment to support learning further, particularly where teaching is only just satisfactory
 - increasing the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by extending the effective modelling and coaching programmes already in place.

- Strengthen the role of middle leaders and managers by:
 - delegating responsibility for aspects of whole-school improvement and then holding middle leaders to account for the effectiveness of their work
 - improving their understanding of whole-school strategic planning.

- Improve the curriculum by:
 - extending opportunities for pupils to take part in more imaginative and creative learning contexts
 - establishing better links between subjects to ensure that key skills in literacy and numeracy are applied more effectively in other subjects
 - providing further opportunities to broaden pupils' cultural development, particularly through arts and sports.

- As a matter of urgency, reduce the school's budget deficit by agreeing and implementing a budget deficit recovery plan in partnership with the local authority.