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10 Jun 2011

Mrs K Jackson
Headteacher
Briercliffe Primary School
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Dear Mrs Jackson,

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

Thank you for the help which you, your staff and your pupils gave when I inspected your school on 9 June 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. I am also grateful to the Chair of the Governing Body and the local authority adviser for their willingness to engage in telephone discussions.

Since the inspection of January 2010 there have been a number of changes in the structure of staffing. Two further teachers are involved in a job sharing arrangement. Following a period of illness, the deputy headteacher has returned to full time duties. In her absence two members of the senior leadership team shared the responsibility of deputy headship between them.

As a result of the inspection on 25 Jan 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 both making improvements and in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

In January 2010 inspectors reported that staff and governors shared the headteacher's vision for school improvement. This commitment was evident strongly in this monitoring inspection and demonstrated by the senior leadership team's determination to make best use of the good support provided by the local authority to improve the achievement of pupils. It was also evident in the fundamental restructuring of the governing body that has taken place since September 2010 in order for it to support the school and hold it to account for its performance. Much more monitoring of the school's work takes place than before. Examples of monitoring include senior leaders observing lessons and scrutinising colleagues' planning and pupils' work. The information gained is useful but, as agreed during discussions, it does not always focus on the learning pupils make. Similarly, while the

January 2011



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

informal discussions that go on between senior leaders, staff and the governing body are helpful, more formal recording of the intended impact and the result of actions taken would provide senior staff and the governing body with a sharper view of successes attained and areas for improvement.

The quality of pupils' writing is improving. The determination of the headteacher and staff to provide an increasingly wider range of opportunities for pupils to write purposefully across the curriculum is paying dividends, not least in pupils' enjoyment of their work. Examples were seen of good quality hand written and computer typed accounts of the climate of Mexico and research into the Victorians. A scrutiny of other work such as that found in science and religious education books revealed an increasingly sensible balance between the use of worksheets to scaffold writing and independent work. Children in Reception, for example, had been learning to write post cards. The ability of pupils to use mathematics and particularly the skills of calculation is also improving. Where progress is best, pupils are provided with opportunities not to do lists of sums but instead ground their learning in practical problem solving, word problems for example. This is enabling the school to meet its aim of improving the confidence of girls in mathematics. The success of this was clearly evident in a Year 6 lesson where girls working alongside boys were being challenged to write formula for the n^{th} turn of a sequence.

The headteacher and senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning and their improving quality. In the best lessons there is a strong focus on what pupils are to learn. In a good English lesson in Years 5 and 6, the teacher successfully focused her pupils on the features poets use to communicate powerfully their ideas. The result was that the pupils could not only identify personification, alliteration and onomatopoeia, they could describe and apply these features in other poems and learning undertaken. A key strength of this lesson, enabling both boys and girls to be excited by poetry, was the teacher's excellent and emotive reading of the text. The quality of teaching and learning is also improving because teachers are increasingly confident in using assessment to ascertain what pupils can and cannot do and then use this information to plan for future lessons and interventions. This means that lessons are better planned to meet the differing needs of pupils in each class although, senior staff are aware that there is still inconsistency in that some teachers plan for learning while others plan activities. The most important feature, though, is the agreement that all assessments of pupils' learning are now accurate. This is a good improvement and confirms the accountability of all staff for their pupils' learning and progress. It also allows the senior leadership team and the governing body to build on this foundation of secure professional judgement.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. I wish you all every success for the future.

Yours sincerely
Mr Mark Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2011



The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place 25 Jan 2010

- Raise standards, particularly in writing and mathematics, by:
 - making guided writing sessions more focused and providing further opportunities to write purposefully across the curriculum
 - reinforcing pupils' mathematical calculation skills more regularly.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring teachers always use assessment information effectively in order to set challenging work that matches the abilities of different groups of pupils
 - making sure that teachers are fully accountable for the progress their pupils make.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - sharpening the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and ensuring that the action taken to bring about improvements in their quality is fully effective
 - developing the expertise of governors in planning strategically for improvement and in holding the school to account for its performance.