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15 June 2011

Mrs C Palfreyman
Headteacher
Parkfield Primary School
Harold Street
Middleton
Manchester
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Dear Mrs Palfreyman,

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 14 June 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

This year a member of the Key Stage 2 teaching staff has been absent for a sustained period due to ill health.

As a result of the inspection in 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.

In 2010, attainment rose at both Key Stages 1 and 2 and was broadly average. However, the proportion of pupils reaching levels above those expected for their age at both key stages remained below the national averages and was weakest in mathematics. Overall, pupils' achievement was satisfactory. There was a substantial improvement in the proportion of Year 6 pupils who made at least the expected rate of progress in both English and mathematics. The school's secure data indicate that the attainment of current Year 2 pupils is broadly average with some improvement, albeit uneven, in the proportion reaching the higher levels. The attainment of the present Year 6 is lower than that of the previous cohort. In line with their various learning needs, this group has made slower progress. Across the school, attainment is weakest in writing. Progress across all subjects is uneven, being slower in Key Stage 2.

The school has put a number of strategies in place to improve assessment and these are beginning to pay dividends. There is now a robust system for tracking pupils' progress regularly and the school analyses the performance of groups of pupils effectively. The accuracy of assessments has improved following the introduction of a nationally recognised

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scheme for measuring the small steps in pupils' learning. Rightly, through regular pupils' progress meetings, staff are held to account for pupils' performance. However, when underperformance is identified it is not consistently addressed with sufficient urgency and rigour. There has been a range of training for staff on techniques which help to assess pupils' learning in lessons and it was evident during lesson observations that some of these are being used effectively. Pupils are accustomed to thinking about how well they understand their work and indicating this briskly to their teachers. Older pupils have opportunities to mark their own and their classmates' work and so think about how to improve. However, despite an agreed marking policy, the quality of teachers' marking varies with too little that helps pupils to understand what they need to do to improve their learning.

The opportunities for pupils to sharpen their mental calculation skills have increased. A short time is dedicated each day to activities, such as the rapid application of times tables. All pupils have a 'maths passport' which helps them track their progress and work towards their next goal. The school's vibrant website is put to good use in encouraging pupils to play mathematical games. It also hosts challenging tasks for the more able. A range of methods for supporting pupils' writing have been implemented, so that pupils have ready and regular access to consistent prompts on, for instance, punctuation or the characteristics of various genres.

Inspection evidence indicates that the quality of teaching is variable. Overall, it is better in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2. The better lessons observed were characterised by enthusiastic teaching, high expectations and good relationships. Teachers made clear links between pupils' individual targets and their work, encouraging pupils to work independently. Pupils responded well to tasks with a 'real-life' purpose. For example, Year 6 pupils worked diligently to plan games of chance for the school's summer fayre. In a number of lessons teaching was lacklustre and activities were not pitched accurately enough so pupils' enthusiasm waned and their progress slowed. Nonetheless, they behaved well. In most lessons observed, additional adults did not make sufficient contribution to pupils' learning at all stages of the sessions.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have established a staffing structure that matches the school's size and needs. Through the robust tracking system and regular monitoring activities, they have a realistic view of the school's performance and have taken a range of appropriate steps to address weaker areas. They have accurately identified the aspects of classroom practice in need of improvement and put in place training and coaching, the benefits of which are more evident in some classes than in others. Not all staff have embraced the developments fully, leading to inconsistencies in practice that hinder the school's drive for improvement. Through nationally recognised training, middle leaders are developing the skills needed to fulfil their roles appropriately.

The local authority has provided considerable, well-targeted support to the school: the impact of this has been satisfactory overall.

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

Mrs Jane Austin

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise standards by:
 - improving pupils' quick recall of number facts and mental calculation skills
 - improving the way pupils structure, punctuate and organise their ideas in writing.

- Accelerate progress in learning by ensuring that assessment information is used in lesson planning to match tasks more closely to pupils' abilities and to challenge the more able pupils to reach higher levels.

- Make good quality teaching consistently available throughout the school.