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Ms L Hodgson
Headteacher
Longmeadow Primary School
Oaks Cross
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Dear Ms Hodgson

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 23 June 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 your pupils and staff who made time to meet me.

Since the last inspection in November 2009, three teachers have left including the Early Years Foundation Stage Leader. Two newly qualified teachers have been appointed to replace them and the previous nurture teacher has taken on a third class. In addition, a new part-time special needs coordinator has also been appointed following the resignation of the previous post holder. The deputy headteacher has taken on the responsibility for leading the Early Years Foundation Stage.

As a result of the inspection on 23 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.

Attendance has ranged from low to above average but currently it is low. Pupils are encouraged to attend school through a variety of incentives, however the impact has been variable and the school is fully aware that this is an area that requires constant monitoring.

Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with varying skills and, in general, make satisfactory progress. In 2010, pupils taking the Year 6 examinations left



school having made satisfactory progress whilst reaching broadly average attainment. Consequently, achievement for this group of pupils was satisfactory.

Inspection evidence and school data indicate that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage joined Nursery with skills broadly in line with those expected for their ages except in calculation, communication, language and literacy where they were low. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are on track to make satisfactory progress overall, with some making good progress, particularly in Nursery. As pupils move through the school, progress remains inconsistent. The strongest progress is in Key Stage 1. Pupil progress by the end of Year 6 remains satisfactory, with attainment on track to be broadly average in 2011. There is some evidence that a growing number of pupils are beginning to make better progress in mathematics and reading, although progress in writing is more variable. The better progress is due to improved teaching and planning, and focused interventions, in literacy and numeracy. Pupils in danger of underachieving are identified through progress meetings three times a year. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers.

Since the last inspection, the school has started the process of creating cross-curricular links between subjects so that pupils have a range of opportunities to develop their writing skills. For example, once a week, pupils have time to complete a piece of extended writing of their own choice. This, along with the introduction of 'wow words' and literacy starters, has helped to extend pupils' vocabulary. However, the full impact of these initiatives is still not fully evident in pupil outcomes.

In mathematics, the school has focused on developing pupils' mental skills through 'rapid starters', 'killer questions' and by providing an hour a week on applying pupil skills in real-life problems. This, along with additional interventions, has led to some notable improvement in pupils' achievement, although progress across Key Stage 2 is still inconsistent.

The teaching sampled during the inspection was variable but good overall. In the strongest lessons, teachers ensure that pupils are clear about the learning intentions and that tasks are suitably challenging, including for the more able. Good teacher questioning and the use of 'learning partners' provides pupils with opportunities to extend their learning. Pupils are encouraged to contribute to the success criteria for the lesson so that they are more able to assess their own progress. Where marking is effective, it provides pupils with clear steps on how to improve their work and pupils have an opportunity to engage in a learning dialogue with the teachers and others. In other classes, marking is variable and not all pupils are clear about their targets. In some lessons, the pace of learning is slow and pupils are unclear about the learning intentions.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, planning has improved notably. It now includes clear information about children's next steps to learning, and notes are made regarding individual children, their achievements and needs. The outdoor learning environment has been significantly improved, and children are able to use this to

develop skills acquired in the indoor classrooms. The school also recognises that the indoor classrooms do not always provide an enriching learning environment. There is an appropriate balance between teacher-led and child-initiated learning, with a strong emphasis on first-hand experiences. Children make satisfactory progress as a result of satisfactory teaching. The school is aware that assessments in this part of the school have not always been accurate in the past and staff are now working towards establishing a more reliable baseline for assessment of progress.

The headteacher and senior leadership team have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. A regular cycle of monitoring opportunities has been established, with subject leaders involved in evaluating the impact of initiatives. While the school development plan accurately identifies the areas of development, the success criteria are not always specific enough to enable leaders to fully evaluate or rigorously monitor the impact on pupil outcomes. Further changes to pupil progress meetings are planned in order to develop greater accountability amongst all staff. The introduction of 'assessing pupil progress' and regular moderation meetings have helped the school to develop more accurate assessments in English and mathematics, with impact evident in the growing number of pupils making accelerated progress.

The support from the local authority has been appropriate, particularly the help given to improve the outside area in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in developing staff knowledge in literacy and numeracy.

The challenge now for the school is to rapidly improve pupil achievement in Key Stage 2 by ensuring that the quality of marking, teaching and learning are consistently good.

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

Susan Gadd
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise standards in writing and mathematics by:
 - extending pupils' vocabulary to enrich their creative writing and providing more opportunities to write purposefully across the curriculum
 - improving pupils' ability to apply their mathematical skills to solve real-life problems.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring teachers always use assessment information effectively to set challenging work for all pupils that reflect their needs
 - providing pupils with clear guidance about how they can improve their work
 - increasing the rigour of leaders' monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.
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- Improve the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - improving planning so that it emphasises what children are to learn rather than what they are to do
 - ensuring leaders rigorously evaluate the impact of actions taken to bring about improvement
 - improving the organisation and use of the outdoor area to effectively develop children's skills across all the areas of learning.