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Mr Neil Blackwell
Headteacher
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Motala Close
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Dear Mr Blackwell

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of
Danesholme Junior School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 29 June 2011. I appreciate the time you gave to our phone discussions and to gathering the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass my thanks to the pupils for the time they gave to share their views with me.

Since the last inspection, a Year 6 teacher has retired.

As a result of the inspection on 17 and 18 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 inadequate progress in making improvements and inadequate progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The 2010 nationally published results indicate that attainment declined last year and was below average. These results confirm that pupils have made inadequate progress in recent years. Pupils are now achieving more in Years 4 to 6 but this is not sufficient to overcome the legacy of low achievement. Current attainment suggests an improvement in mathematics but this is less apparent in English. In the lessons observed, progress was limited at times because pupils of different abilities are not always challenged. Levels of engagement varied because teachers did not always take effective steps to ensure pupils worked at a fast pace. Pupils in Year 3 progress more slowly because teachers do not take sufficient account of what pupils have learnt in their infant school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making better progress largely as a result of the increase in the amount of intervention support and because teachers are ensuring they undertake more appropriate tasks in lessons. The increased emphasis on investigations in science is increasing pupils' enjoyment of this subject. Not enough use is made of the wider curriculum to promote literacy and numeracy.



The school has taken steps to improve its systems for the monitoring of absence and is working more closely with external agencies. Calls to parents and carers are made on the first day of absence. More generally there has been limited progress in improving the effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers, and as a result attendance has not improved and remains below the national average. Pupils indicate that low-level disruption occasionally interferes with their learning.

Changes have been made to teaching but these are not having a consistently positive impact on learning. For instance, the use of 'steps to success' have resulted in greater clarity about the purpose of the tasks being undertaken. In the most effective lessons, the learning steps were strongly linked to the relevant parts of the National Curriculum so the challenge was clear to different ability pupils. However, too often these steps lacked challenge, especially for the more able. In part, this is because they were the same, regardless of the ability of pupils. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to make choices so they can increase the level of challenge they experience. Teachers' questioning has improved so there is no longer a reliance on willing volunteers. However, opportunities were missed to focus questions on particular ability groups and to encourage pupils to be critical of each other's responses.

The level of pupil engagement in lessons was observed to be greater where teachers peppered their lessons with reviews of learning that praised pupils for their efforts and clarified more precisely how pupils could excel. However, teachers do not adopt sufficient strategies to lift the pace of learning, for instance, through the setting of agreed time limits and the introduction of an element of competition. At times, pupils learnt very little because they were involved in time-consuming activities that required insufficient thought.

Teachers are quite confident in using information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance their teaching. For instance, a Year 6 teacher used this technology well to highlight a pupils' commendable attempt at producing a concise account of a fairground ride. Pupils reported positively about how the school's new learning platform allows them to learn outside of lessons. However, it continues to be the case that pupils do not have enough access to ICT in lessons and this reduces the progress they can make. For instance, pupils have insufficient opportunities to use word processing in order to more quickly and efficiently edit their work. The school has sensible plans to increase pupil involvement with ICT.

Teachers' marking is reasonably effective in highlighting the strengths in pupils' work and the areas for improvement but pupils are not always given the time to respond to this. Pupils have opportunities to review each other's work and teachers regularly check on how confident pupils are in grasping the 'steps to success'. However, pupils

are not sufficiently involved in using assessment criteria to identify for themselves their current levels and what they must do to improve.

The school has organised staff well to maximise the impact of its more effective practitioners in year groups. The use of data to hold staff to account for the progress their pupils make is improving. Middle leaders are growing in confidence and are beginning to have more impact, largely because of the support provided by local authority advisers in the past.

Despite this generally more positive picture, the pace of improvement is too slow and, as a result, too many pupils continue to make inadequate progress. The school has an overly positive view about the effectiveness of teaching and learning because, when lessons are observed, insufficient account is taken of the progress made by different groups of pupils. New approaches in the classroom are not always implemented well because teachers are not receiving the feedback they need in order to be able to demonstrate consistent effectiveness. Inadequate practice persists.

The school has received relatively little external support since its last inspection. The School Improvement Partner has a good awareness of the school and is assisting in the development of more effective links with the feeder infant school.

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

Kevin Sheldrick
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- To ensure pupils make at least consistently good progress in English, mathematics and science by:
 - sustaining the improvement in teaching so that it is consistently at least good
 - ensuring that whole-school teaching strategies are consistently adopted in the teaching of all subjects
 - sharing good practice so that all teachers know what good teaching looks like.

- To improve opportunities for pupils to use ICT to develop skills and support their learning by:
 - providing suitable equipment for use in lessons
 - giving regular opportunities in English, mathematics and science lessons for pupils to use ICT to support pupil's understanding.

- To improve rates of attendance by:
 - helping those families whose children do not attend regularly enough to ensure better attendance
 - using the support services more rigorously to work with families
 - developing first day calling for all absent pupils.