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Mrs C Townson
Millbrook School
Gews Corner
Waltham Cross
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Dear Mrs Townson

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Millbrook School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 29 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 particular thanks to those staff I observed and spoke with and to the governor with whom I discussed the school's progress since it was last inspected.

The school has enjoyed a period of relative stability since the last inspection, with one new teacher appointed.

As a result of the inspection on 11 February 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' progress is accelerating and the proportion whose progress is good has increased. At the time of the last inspection pupils' attainment was broadly average. Since then attainment has improved considerably. In the most recent national tests almost all pupils reached the nationally expected Level 4 in English and mathematics and half reached the higher Level 5 in both.

Achievement is rising because the quality of teaching and learning across the school is improving. All is at least satisfactory and an increasing proportion is good or outstanding. The best teaching uses a range of questions to assess how well pupils are doing and to challenge their thinking. In the best teaching and learning teachers' expectations are high, learning is well planned and the pace is brisk. Where learning



is satisfactory the pace slows because resources are not sufficiently well organised and explanations lack clarity. The quality of writing across the curriculum has improved, with pupils given the chance to write detailed accounts in subjects such as history, and the opportunity to write at length in English lessons. Some of this extended writing makes good use of information and communication technology to enliven book covers and give a professional look to stories. The school has been effective in promoting enhanced opportunities for pupils to read to adults and to each other. In tandem with the more effective use of guided reading this has contributed to the rise in standards and pupils' increasing confidence. There is now a greater focus on investigative skills in science. For example, in an observed science lesson pupils were discussing the optimum conditions for seed germination. They understood the significance of a fair test and that only one variable is changed at a time. The expertise of staff has been well utilised to model high quality teaching. Lesson planning is clear and detailed with appropriate differentiation so that the learning needs of individuals and groups of pupils are identified and met. Pupils are enthusiastic learners who are eager to respond to questions and work well together. They have positive attitudes to learning and behave consistently well.

Aspects of assessment were good at the time of the last inspection and have improved further. The school carefully records and analyses data on the progress of all pupils. This information is now used to more effectively inform pupil progress meetings, where the learning needs of individual pupils are discussed, underachievement identified and appropriate support put in place. The use of learning targets linked to the National Curriculum is generally good, but the way in which progress against these is recorded is inconsistent. Marking is encouraging and supportive but not all marking is clearly referenced to pupils' targets. The best marking is of very high quality so that pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve.

The single central register of checks on adults who work with children complies with statutory requirements and staff training in safeguarding is up-to-date.

The headteacher has a clear focus on improvement and has been successful in improving teaching and learning and raising attainment. Governors know the school well and carefully monitor progress with the school development plan (SDP). While the SDP identifies appropriate areas for improvement some targets do not reflect the school's ambition for improvement and higher attainment sufficiently well. The school expects all pupils to achieve well but targets and success criteria in the SDP are not explicitly referenced to how much progress pupils should make. Nonetheless the school's capacity to improve is strong because of its ambition, clear focus on improving pupils' achievement and the positive impact of the changes it has already put in place.

The local authority has provided effective support, particularly for literacy and numeracy. The school greatly values the consistency and impact of the current support it is receiving.

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

Robert Lovett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Further raise attainment and achievement in writing, reading, mathematics and science by;
 - developing more opportunities for writing across the curriculum and improving the quality of spelling and the presentation of written work
 - enabling pupils to develop their skills and confidence in reading to a wider audience and in sharing their reading with others
 - spreading the good development of mathematical skills evident in Years 5 and 6 to all other year groups
 - developing pupils' investigative skills in science.

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning to good or better by;
 - building on existing good assessment practice and questioning seen in the Nursery and in the teaching of Year 6 mathematics, to extend and enhance teaching skills across the school
 - in Years 1 and 2 develop rigour in the pace of learning and in the challenges set, so that progress for all pupils accelerates
 - increase identification of work for different groups in lesson planning and ensure that all marking tells pupils how to improve their work independently.