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Mrs L Billingsley
Headteacher
Birchen Coppice Primary School
Woodbury Road
Kidderminster
DY11 7JJ

Dear Mrs Billingsley

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Birchen Coppice Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 6 July 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 everyone who spoke to me, including members of staff, pupils and a representative from the local authority.

Following the last inspection, the school has moved into a new building. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in 2010. During the inspection visit, all pupils were experiencing a transition day with their new teacher for next year. Consequently, almost none of the pupils were being taught by their regular teacher.

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

Pupils join the school at a level well below that expected for their age. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is significantly below the national average in English and mathematics but results in the Key Stage 2 tests in 2010 were much higher than in previous years. The senior leadership team has gone a considerable way to enable pupils to narrow the gap with the national average for English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2. Teacher assessments from current Year 5 and earlier year groups indicate that pupils are on track to close the gap even further, although standards in the current Year 6 remain low. Rigorous monitoring by senior leaders



and evidence from pupils' work indicates that progress in lessons is good for most but not all year groups in Key Stages 1 and 2. It is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress because of the quality of the curriculum provision and support for them.

The enhanced senior leadership team has placed a strong focus on raising attainment through improving the quality of teaching. Their own, and the very recent extensive local authority monitoring, indicate that the proportion of teaching that is regularly good has increased, demonstrating a good capacity to improve further. Most of the lessons seen during the inspection visit were satisfactory but teachers were spending their first day with their new class. In all of the lessons which we observed together, the headteacher had an accurate judgement of the quality of teaching and a recognition that not all teachers had taught as well as they do with their regular classes.

The strengths in lessons seen were the good relationships between teachers and pupils, the calm purposeful atmosphere and good behaviour of the overwhelming majority of pupils. The needs of lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities were provided for well in both mainstream classrooms and the learning support units. Teachers consistently shared with pupils the intended learning outcomes of the lessons and provided opportunities for some groups to work independently on tasks. In some lessons, however, pupils spent too long on the carpet or on whole-class activities. When questioning pupils, teachers at times allowed one or two individuals to dominate, allowing others to sit passively. The school has a generous allocation of additional adults in classrooms but the effectiveness of how well they are deployed varied from class to class.

The school did not reach its target to increase attendance to be in line with the national average by September 2010 but there has been a three-year rising trend of reducing absence so that the gap with the national average has been reduced. The proportion of persistent absences has fallen sharply and it is now in line with similar schools. The school has sought to prioritise attendance by assigning responsibility to a member of the senior leadership team. A series of rewards and incentives to promote attendance has been successful, particularly with older pupils. The rate of attendance is higher among older pupils than younger pupils. Monitoring by year groups and class is detailed but less so for monitoring by identifiable groups.

The curriculum focus has been on ensuring pupils raise their attainment in literacy. This has led to significant improvements in outcomes for pupils, such as the better reading project aimed at middle attaining pupils in Years 4 and 5. However, numeracy has not had the same level of attention. The curriculum provision for lower attaining pupils, including the intensive support they receive, has contributed to significant increases in pupils' reading ages in Year 6. There has not been such an impact on middle attaining pupils, where the independent tasks they are set do not always sufficiently challenge them

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

Mark Sims

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy by the end of Year 6 by increasing the opportunities for pupils to work independently and by encouraging the use of a rich vocabulary, both written and spoken, in all lessons.
- Improve attendance levels to national averages by September 2010.
- Refine the focus of the monitoring of teaching to increase the proportion of teaching judged to be good or better.
- Monitor the impact of proposed changes to the curriculum, to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils.