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6 July 2011

Mrs K Sutton
Headteacher
Claremont Community Primary School
Westminster Road
Blackpool
Lancashire
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Dear Mrs Sutton,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Claremont Community Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school with Sarah Drake, additional inspector, on 5 July 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has retired and the deputy headteacher has left. A new headteacher has been in post since September 2010. A new deputy headteacher, who is currently an assistant headteacher, has been appointed from September 2011. The school changed from three form entry to two form entry in September 2010. Consequently, the senior leadership team has been restructured. There have also been several changes of teaching staff.

As a result of the inspection on 18 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.

Pupils join the school with levels of skill that are well below those typically found. Most pupils are making satisfactory progress, reaching standards of attainment that remain below average by the time they leave. However, this overall picture is complicated by the high numbers of pupils who join and leave the school at times different from the usual. School assessment data show that attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2010 was lower than in 2009. This was partly associated with the lower ability of the cohort. Another factor was that almost one third of the pupils joined the school during Year 6. The school's own analyses show that outcomes were significantly poorer for this group of newcomers than for those who had been at the school longer. School assessment data for 2011 suggest rates of progress are improving in mathematics, but overall attainment remains low. A scrutiny of work confirmed that attainment is low, particularly in writing.

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Lesson observations confirm that rates of progress are improving, albeit slowly and inconsistently. Pupils are generally attentive and engaged while teachers are talking because teachers set work in an appropriate context and involve pupils using questions and sometimes other strategies, such as talk partners. During independent and group work the pace is often steady rather than rapid and, while some pupils work productively and consistently, others find it hard to concentrate and are easily distracted when not directly supervised by an adult. Work in books is often poorly presented but in lessons there were several examples of pupils exclaiming enthusiastically when they managed to achieve something, showing their desire to do well.

The quality of teaching is improving, although it is not good enough to ensure that all groups of pupils make the faster progress needed to ensure they reach age-related expectations. Lesson plans include lesson objectives but these are often expressed in very general terms and do not make clear precisely what pupils are expected to learn. In some lessons there is good encouragement for pupils to think and work things out for themselves. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, a puzzle square with symbols representing numbers captured pupils' imagination and, despite finding it difficult, they worked hard to identify the solution. There was some productive, collaborative work as they helped or gave clues to each other. Teachers often make good use of pupils' ideas and work in plenary sessions.

In many lessons, teachers take care to plan different work for pupils of different abilities but some pupils, especially the more able, are not sufficiently challenged and expectations are not always high enough. Occasionally, time is lost because of delay in giving out materials or because groups are awaiting instructions. No serious misbehaviour was observed in lessons, even when pupils drifted off task and chatted or occasionally wandered to other tables, but dealing with this inattention takes teachers' time and reduces that spent supporting other pupils' learning. Transience has reduced this year but remains a problem for a few classes. For example, in one Year 3 class nine pupils have left since the start of the year and seven joined. Appropriate arrangements are in place to support new pupils but the frequent changes make teachers' planning more difficult.

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is improving but the quality of intervention by adults is variable both in Reception and Nursery classes. During the inspection, some highly skilled open questioning that extended thinking, speaking and listening was observed, but other adult interventions missed opportunities to do so. For example, some children who are inclined to use gestures rather than language are not given enough encouragement to use words. Senior staff have a sound understanding of this and specific plans are in place to improve this aspect further next year.

Pupils know their targets, the progress they are making towards these and what they need to do to achieve them. Regular teacher assessments feed into the progress tracking system which enables interventions to be targeted carefully and there is increasing involvement of class teachers in such plans which is giving them a greater sense of ownership.

The new headteacher has an astute understanding of the school's strategic priorities. She has established a stronger focus on raising the achievement of all pupils, including those who join the school during Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Her resolve and determination are changing the culture and improving morale. Strategies introduced during the year are beginning to have an impact, although the full benefit is not evident in results. Instances of challenging behaviour in the early part of the year led to a new behaviour management policy. This has been implemented effectively and consistently and has improved the climate for learning. The restructuring of the senior team following the change to two-form entry is intended to enable the school to benefit from greater stability at senior level and more clearly defined roles. The development of the work of the subject leaders has begun to accelerate this year after a slow start. The science coordinator has tackled weaknesses in science provision. She has carried out a check of planning and pupils' work and has begun to modify the curriculum to improve the development of scientific enquiry skills through offering pupils more practical and investigative work. Effective behaviour management is encouraging teachers to offer more of these opportunities. Enjoyment of science was evident both in the lesson observed and from pupils' feedback. However, practice is not consistent across the school. The science coordinator is also supporting other subject coordinators.

Attendance has improved significantly over the past year as a result of the dedicated work of the school, although it is still below average. There has also been a substantial reduction in persistent absence. New systems of rewards and sanctions are well understood by all and have helped to raise the profile of attendance. Pupils who met with inspectors spoke enthusiastically about their experiences of school which they clearly enjoy.

A systematic programme of formal lesson observations has been implemented this year, although it does not include science lessons. A staff development programme firmly directed at improving the quality of teaching has been established and teachers value peer observation opportunities which are encouraging them to focus on the learning of different groups of pupils and to be more reflective about their own practice. Assessment data are shared more widely and teachers are more involved in planning interventions where underachievement is identified.

The local authority has provided appropriate support through the work of the School Improvement Partner and consultants.

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,

Ruth James
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 18 November 2009

- Raise attainment and improve achievement in English and mathematics throughout the school so that pupils reach average standards by the end of Year 6.
- Raise attainment and improve pupils' achievement in science in Key Stages 1 and 2 by:
 - implementing a clear programme of work for all year groups that builds progressively on earlier learning and consistently promotes the development of key investigative skills
 - ensuring that pupils are not withdrawn from science lessons for other work
 - rigorously monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning
 - evaluating the impact of actions taken to improve the provision in relation to their impact on pupils' attainment and achievement.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching throughout the school, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, to be at least good. To this end:
 - ensure that work is consistently challenging, interesting and matched well to pupils' needs
 - improve the quality of adult intervention by Early Years Foundation Stage staff in the activities children choose for themselves.
- Improve the rigour with which leaders and managers monitor, evaluate and take action to improve attainment, achievement and the quality of provision, particularly teaching and learning, by:
 - implementing a programme of regular, formalised, lesson observations
 - implementing regular, formalised, analyses of pupils' work that focuses on the extent of progress for different groups and how well the quality of teaching is meeting pupils' needs
 - implementing more rigorous analysis of assessment data to enable comparisons of the progress of different groups of pupils, for example, by gender and between parallel classes
 - enabling subject leaders, especially in English, mathematics and science, to be more informed about pupils' attainment and progress and the quality of provision in their subjects

- taking action to modify the curriculum, as necessary, to meet pupils' needs, for example, in response to indicators of underachievement of specific groups of pupils, such as girls.
- Improve attendance so that the gap between the school's attendance rate and the national average is further reduced and rates move consistently toward the national average.