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18 July 2011

Mrs J Davis  
Headteacher  
Ash Grove Junior and Infant School  
Ash Grove  
South Elmsall  
Pontefract  
West Yorkshire  
WF9 2TF

Dear Mrs Davis,

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Ash Grove Junior and Infant School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 15 July 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. I also welcomed the opportunity to talk with staff, pupils, and members of the governing body.

Since the previous inspection the leadership team has been expanded at senior and middle level. Four new governors have joined the governing body. The number of pupils attending the school has increased from 276 to 311. Many more pupils than usual joined the school part way through the year with the large majority entering Key Stage 2.

As a result of the inspection on 2 and 3 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' attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 in 2010 was broadly average, representing satisfactory progress for most pupils, taking their starting points into account. More pupils attained at the expected Level 4 than in the previous year, although the proportion of pupils attaining at the higher Level 5 was below that expected. Pupils in the current Year 6 are making satisfactory progress and look set to attain broadly average standards in English and mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in this year group are making similar rates of progress to their peers.

A strong focus has been maintained on raising standards in mathematics and writing throughout the school. Strategies such as individual tuition for pupils, small group work to support the development of numeracy and reading, and an emphasis on pupils' handwriting,

January 2011



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

presentation and spelling throughout the school, have begun to have an impact on the rate of progress pupils are now making. Similarly, the good quality learning and play opportunities that staff provide for children in the Nursery and Reception classes emphasise the development of language and communication skills, mark-making and numeracy. This ensures that children are being very well prepared for their next steps in learning. Consequently, almost all children are now making at least good and often outstanding progress from their individual starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage to enter Year 1 working securely at the levels expected for their age. All these factors mean that the most recent teacher assessments show that the pace of learning has picked up and rates of progress are accelerating across the school; most notably in Key Stage 1. As a result more pupils are now on track to attain at the higher levels and to achieve their individually challenging targets.

Pupils' attendance has improved as a result of a carefully considered range of actions and is now broadly average. This is also contributing effectively to the pupils' improving progress and achievements. A governor-led attendance committee has driven through the implementation of the school's attendance strategy to good effect and monitors pupils' attendance regularly. The learning mentor works closely with teachers, parents and external agencies when necessary. Pupils are constantly reminded about the importance of good attendance through whole-class targets and celebration events that reward individual pupils for 100% attendance. A particular strength is the way that parents' awareness of the importance of good attendance is being raised. For example, through regular newsletters and making time missed and the reasons given for absence a very clear focus in pupils' progress reports, discussions at parents' evenings and in the letters sent home when attendance looks like it might be starting to slip.

The quality of teaching is improving and the proportion of good or better lessons is rising steadily. Teachers provide more opportunities within lessons for pupils to undertake independent activities and group work and to assess their own and each other's learning. Teachers build in plenty of opportunities to assess pupils' understanding and monitor progress. They are generally more confident in using the school's data and assessment information to plan lessons and ensure they contain a range of activities that cater more effectively for pupils' differing needs and abilities. School leaders consulted with pupils and staff before introducing a new marking policy in September 2010. While teachers' feedback and marking usually indicate to pupils how they can improve their work further, school leaders recognise there is more to do to embed this practice routinely and consistently throughout the school. They have taken account of this in their most recent school improvement plan.

The good gains in pupils' attendance and progress and the school's upward trajectory are the direct result of the determined actions that school leaders have taken and the greater involvement of staff and the governing body in school self-evaluation. The addition of the Early Years Foundation Stage leader to the team of senior leaders and a clearer structure for delegating decision making at middle leadership level, provides a stronger platform for school improvement. Senior leaders know their school well and have an accurate picture of

what future actions are needed. Strategies to monitor progress and manage performance are effective. School improvement plans are sharply focused with clear success criteria, although there is more to do to ensure that the outcomes of actions are more sharply measured and reported. There are very clear signs, such as the impact of the successful actions arising from the attendance and resource committees and engagement in school safeguarding arrangements, that the governing body is more fully involved in the life of the school. As a result the governing body is providing more-effective support and challenge and proving more successful in evaluating its work. Safeguarding and child-protection procedures meet current requirements and are organised extremely well. Support from external agencies, the local authority and the School Improvement Partner have been good, effectively helping the headteacher to implement the actions needed to tackle the areas for improvement.

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

Dr Wendy Ripley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 2 and 3 February 2010**

- To raise standards in writing and mathematics throughout the school, by:
  - ensuring that attendance improves
  - providing pupils with more independent learning activities.
  
- To ensure that all teaching is consistently good, by:
  - ensuring that marking is consistently used to inform pupils of how to improve their work
  - using the school's data more effectively, to ensure that activities are more closely matched to meet the individual needs of pupils.
  
- To improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - distributing leadership across the school, in order to support the headteacher more in undertaking the school's self-evaluation activities
  - governors becoming more involved in evaluating the work of the school so that they are more informed in order to support and challenge the school's work.