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14 July 2011

Mrs L Paxton
Headteacher
Oakhill Primary School
Rookery Lane
Oakhill
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
ST4 5NS

Dear Mrs Paxton,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Oakhill Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 July 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. The school is currently in the midst of a significant building programme to accommodate more pupils in September.

As a result of the inspection on 20 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 inadequate progress in making improvements and inadequate progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The inspection has raised very serious concerns. These will be considered by the appropriate Regional Director, Inspection Delivery, who will decide when the school will next be inspected.

The school did not undertake the statutory assessment tests in 2010. However, the results of teacher assessments for 2010 and the national end of Key Stage 2 tests for 2011 show satisfactory improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 in writing. However, the proportion reaching Level 5 has not changed. In mathematics, there has been inadequate improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching Level 4. Attainment is significantly below average in both writing and mathematics.

The school has introduced the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. This is proving successful in raising attainment in reading and writing. Phonics lessons have also been introduced for those pupils who have difficulty with reading and writing in Key Stage 2. As a result, these pupils are now improving the accuracy of their spelling and making up for gaps in their learning. There are also increased opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in a wider

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variety of contexts across the curriculum. This, together with the introduction of 'The Big Write', is starting to accelerate progress. Nonetheless, opportunities for pupils to practise their basic skills continue to be missed. For instance, in an art lesson where pupils were working with initial designs for a memorial garden, opportunities were missed for them to make notes about what they would improve and why. Additionally, opportunities are missed to improve the quality of the writing pupils do outside English lessons because this work is not marked with the accuracy of that in their English books.

The quality of teaching in English lessons has improved but is not consistent across the school. In English, teaching is usually focused on matching work to the learning needs of different groups of pupils. This has resulted in some improvements in the quality of pupils' writing. When pupils are asked how they are getting on or how they can improve their work, they have a sketchy idea only of the levels they are working at and are unsure about how to improve. Pupils refer to the general assessment guidance they have in the front of their exercise books but are not sure which aspect of it would improve individual pieces of work. Guidance given to pupils through teachers' marking lacks detail and is not specific enough to enable them to identify how exactly to improve individual pieces of work.

In mathematics, there are still significant weaknesses in teaching and too often pupils continue to find work too easy or too difficult. Teachers' explanations and demonstrations do not always adequately prepare pupils for the tasks which follow. Consequently, pupils have difficulty with tasks set and their progress is too slow.

Information from assessments informs senior managers of pupils' progress and this information is now being used more effectively to determine whether extra help is needed for pupils who appear to be falling behind. The tracking system reveals that pupils are now making satisfactory progress in writing. However, pupils rate of progress is not yet good enough in order to raise attainment further and to enable them to reach the nationally expected levels of attainment in writing.

Currently, the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning processes lack clarity and focus. The school does not evaluate its own work systematically so it is difficult to assess what progress has been made. Improvement planning is ineffective because it is not updated regularly enough. The impact of strategies to raise attainment is not robustly monitored; therefore, the school is slow to make the improvements to its approaches, which are sometimes necessary. Monitoring does not pick up sufficiently on the weaknesses in teaching, including the use of assessment in the planning of mathematics lessons and weaknesses in marking. This has slowed the rate of improvement of attainment and progress in mathematics and to a lesser extent in writing. Pupils' behaviour continues to be good and attendance is improving. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good.

The local authority provides satisfactory support to the school but, because the school's systems for monitoring, self-evaluation and improvement planning lack clarity and focus, this support has not had sufficient impact on the progress the school is making in the key 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

Judith Tolley
Additional inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 20 January 2010

- raise standards in mathematics
- raise standards in writing
- ensure the assessment focuses more sharply on pupils' individual needs in order to identify more clearly their next steps in learning and promote quicker progress.