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Mr Jim Crawford
Headteacher
Sinfin Primary School
Sheridan Street
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Dear Mr Crawford

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Tuesday 20 September 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the staff and the representatives of the governing body with whom I spoke, for their time and courtesy. I would like to particularly thank the pupils for the enjoyable time I spent talking with them.

Since the school's last inspection, there have been some changes in staffing, with two newly qualified teachers appointed in September 2011.

As a result of the inspection on 11 June 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 key factor in the judgement of inadequate progress is that overall attainment at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 has been significantly lower than the national averages over the last three years. Results of tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2011, in both English and mathematics, were at their lowest for five years. This represents inadequate progress for most pupils. In lessons observed jointly with senior leaders, many pupils continue to make inadequate progress and as a result, do not reach standards appropriate for their age in English or mathematics.

The quality of teaching is not strong enough to help pupils make the progress required to raise their attainment. There are insufficient good lessons throughout the school to tackle the significant legacy of underachievement and enable pupils to make more rapid and accelerated progress. Few lessons include the use of creative activities, challenging questions or high expectations. Frequently, the use of questioning requires pupils to give only short answers and they are not extended through the use of more probing questions. Assessment information is not used well enough and as a result, planning does not clearly indicate what is expected of different groups of pupils, particularly the more able, from the beginning of the lesson. Work is not well matched to the wide range of pupils' attainment in mixed-age classes, or to pupils' different levels of understanding of the English language. As a result, the pace of learning is slow and pupils' progress is not as good as it should be. Although there is some use of personal learning targets, too many pupils do not know or understand their targets and are not involved in evaluating their own progress towards achieving them. Consequently, their understanding is limited and they are unsure about what they have learnt. However, despite this, pupils generally behave well in lessons and display positive attitudes to learning.

The school has not provided pupils with sufficient support to improve their calculation skills. Pupils display difficulties with simple calculations and do not have a range of strategies to draw upon to solve them. Additionally, they do not have enough opportunities to apply their calculation skills across the curriculum.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are beginning to make better progress in some areas of learning. Some of their strongest skills lie in their dispositions and attitudes to learning, while they remain weakest in some aspects of mathematical development, including calculation, and writing. Learning objectives are not always clear because planning is focused more on activities than the skills to be developed. Staff are working hard to develop a better balance between adult-initiated and child-initiated activities. However, they recognise that there is still some work to do to ensure that adults are always deployed effectively to guide the children's learning and assess their understanding. The small staff team work well together and are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of provision.

The weaknesses in pupils' outcomes and in the quality of teaching and learning have not been addressed successfully by the school's leaders. The pace of change to address declining standards has been too slow. Although senior staff undertake monitoring activities and track pupils' progress, the information gained is not evaluated or used well enough to ensure the necessary improvements. There is insufficient analysis of the progress made by different groups of pupils in order to take timely action to improve the quality of provision, or to tackle underachievement. The school's self-evaluation process is inadequate because it lacks rigour and fails to provide an accurate view of performance. This, together with the decline in standards since the last inspection, demonstrates that the school has an inadequate capacity to improve. The governing body, while very supportive of the school, is not rigorous enough in ensuring that senior leaders are sufficiently challenged, or held to account.

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 support received from the local authority has not been sufficiently focused to have had any significant impact on enabling the school to make the improvements that are urgently required.

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

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Build on the work to raise pupils' attainment in mathematics by:
 - closing identified gaps in calculation.

- Ensure the good quality of learning is consistent in all lessons by:
 - ensuring questions asked of pupils and their own evaluations of learning focus sharply on revealing what they understand they have learned.

- Raise standards in writing and calculation in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - increasing the amount of adult-led activities in Reception promoting writing and calculation skills
 - increasing the emphasis on writing and calculation skills across all of the areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage provision.