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23 September 2011

Mr R Marsh  
The Headteacher  
Stoke Damerel Primary School  
Collingwood Road  
Stoke  
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Dear Mr Marsh

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Stoke Damerel Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 22 September 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. I would be grateful if you would pass on my thanks to everyone who assisted me during the day, including the pupils, staff, members of the governing body and the representative of the local authority.

The school has experienced several changes since the previous inspection. Two teachers have left the school and been replaced. One teacher has taken maternity leave and her absence has been covered by a temporary appointment. In April 2011, the English coordinator left the school. Two assistant headteachers have shared leadership and management responsibilities for the subject as an interim arrangement whilst a replacement is recruited. Two new members have joined the governing body.

As a result of the inspection on 9 and 10 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 satisfactory progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 fell around the time of previous inspection. The proportion of pupils who reached the levels expected for their age in



English and mathematics was significantly lower than the average and below the government floor standards. One reason for this is because several pupils did not make the progress they should in mathematics. The school's determined efforts to address this have met with some notable success. Unvalidated results, for the national tests taken by pupils in Year 6 in 2011, showed that attainment had risen substantially in both subjects. There was a marked rise in the portions of pupils who attained the expected and higher levels. These results are likely to exceed the national figures. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was lower than the previous year in reading and writing, but higher in mathematics. Overall, results are likely to be broadly in line with other schools. However, pupils' work in books and current assessments show that some variability remains in the achievement of pupils in other year groups. This is because actions taken to improve the quality of teaching are not sufficiently established in all classes.

Teaching observed during the monitoring inspection was generally strong and pupils made good progress within most lessons seen. Lesson plans are more strongly linked to pupils' previous attainment, including clear learning objectives in the form of 'Can I ...?' questions. These assist both pupils and teachers when evaluating the learning that has taken place. Pupils report they enjoy their learning and their behaviour makes a notable contribution to lessons. Teachers give crisp explanations, clear instructions and have developed effective classroom routines so that little learning time is wasted. Resources, including interactive whiteboards, are used well to illustrate concepts and interest pupils. Teaching assistants' support is effectively managed to meet the needs of those who require additional support. Nevertheless, teachers do not always question individuals incisively about their learning and opportunities are missed to provide clear expectations to individuals and groups. Consequently, some pupils have a limited understanding of what they are expected to achieve in each part of the lesson. In Key Stage 1, the early teaching of reading and writing, including systematic phonics, is well emphasised, but teachers do not take every opportunity to model and promote early literacy skills.

Effective steps have been taken by the headteacher and senior leaders to bring greater rigour to the school's work and to boost the quality of teaching. Plans for improvement have been sharpened by frequent updates. These enable staff and members of the governing body to evaluate the difference that actions are making and the school's progress towards meeting its objectives. Subject leaders, met by HMI during this inspection, report they have a fuller understanding of their role in securing the necessary changes. Monitoring is increasingly a collaborative activity. This is because the school has implemented a comprehensive cycle of regular checks involving leaders and managers at all levels. Greater use is made of assessment information to adapt the curriculum in response to emerging underachievement. Intervention programmes, such as those to improve reading in Year 6 and challenge higher attaining pupils in writing at the end of Key Stage 1, have been used to good effect. Whilst expectations have risen, current data systems do not always alert leaders to all individuals whose progress has slowed so that the reasons can be investigated.



Members of the governing body are increasingly involved in monitoring the school's work for themselves. Specific roles linked to improvement priorities are supplemented by visits to school, meetings with staff and regular reports from subject leaders. Consequently, the governing body is increasingly confident in asking questions and helping shape the school's future development. At the time of this monitoring inspection, secure arrangements were in place for checking the suitability of staff to work with children.

The application of literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects are at an early stage of implementation. The mathematics subject leader has undertaken concerted work to identify the calculation and mental arithmetic strategies expected of each year group. These documents provide a clear sense of progression throughout the school and include key vocabulary, end of year targets and helpful examples. Pupils spoken to during the inspection talked enthusiastically of applying their measuring skills within science investigations. They also recalled writing for different purposes in other subjects, such as composing the biographies of historical characters. However, cross-curricular links are not sufficiently systematic to ensure progression and address the remaining underachievement.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the outdoor surroundings are increasingly well utilised to support children's development across all areas of learning. Planned, purposeful activities enable children to learn outdoors by direct teaching and through play. Large construction materials, hoops for throwing and soft play apparatus offer important opportunities for children's physical development and allow them to make choices and do things for themselves. At the time of the monitoring inspection, adults were assessing children who had recently started the school. Their timely interactions stirred children's curiosity and provided valuable opportunities to assess their learning. However, some assessments were missed because recording materials were not near at hand.

The school has drawn effectively on the support of external partners including that provided by the local authority. For example, a literacy consultant has supported the assistant headteachers in their interim leadership of English. Other support has been evident in the planning and delivery of staff training to improve assessment and the teaching of writing. Similarly, an advanced skills teacher, from a local primary school, has supported a Year 6 teacher in challenging higher attaining pupils in mathematics. Staff value their increased independence in directing the support and recognise this as evidence of the school's growing capacity for further 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

Ian Hancock  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**



## Annex

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

- Produce a clear and achievable school improvement plan with a strong focus on raising achievement for all pupils by:
  - identifying regular monitoring activities for governors, subject leaders and the senior management team which are strongly focused on the progress that pupils make in lessons
  - detailing the specific actions and identifying the measurable gains in pupils' progress using pupil tracking data to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of intended actions.
- Raise the quality of teaching and learning from satisfactory to good by ensuring that teachers' assessments are effective in identifying individual pupils' progress and used to produce precise learning objectives that meet their needs by:
  - developing cross-curricular links to further improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills
  - ensuring the provision of outdoor activities fully engages Early Years Foundation Stage children in purposeful learning and development.