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Miss K Collins
Acting headteacher
Beardall Street Primary and Nursery School
Beardall Street
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Dear Miss Collins

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Beardall Street Primary and Nursery School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 28 September 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

Since the last inspection, the headteacher has left and you have been acting headteacher for less than a year.

As a result of the inspection on 22 April 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 satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The proportion of pupils attaining Level 4 and above in English has increased since the last inspection from 64% to 79% and is now in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils making the expected two levels of progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in English is close to the national median. In mathematics, however, the proportion of pupils attaining Level 4 and above over the same period remained low throughout despite rising slightly from 61% at the start to 70% this summer. Only 68% of pupils made the expected progress in mathematics. Achievement is satisfactory in English but inadequate and improving slowly in mathematics. Nevertheless, the school is securely above the minimum 'floor target' set nationally by the government.

The school has implemented a range of strategies to try and raise attendance, and these are beginning to have an impact. Parents and carers of pupils with low



attendance are invited into school for a discussion with you at half-termly intervals. Follow-up monitoring shows that this has an impact and the attendance of these pupils subsequently improves. There are awards for classes with the highest attendance and a member of the office staff has been given additional time to ring the families of poor attenders on the first day of absence. Despite early signs of improvement, attendance remains low.

Following the last inspection, the school provided training to its staff in planning and delivering short, challenging and fast-paced learning tasks. Good practice is regularly shared at staff meetings and you have monitored provision through formal lesson observations and through informal 'learning walks' around the school. The school's monitoring shows 90% of teaching to be good or better and this is in line with a small sample of lessons visited during this inspection. In one outstanding lesson seen, learning commenced with a role play which helped Year 5 pupils imagine the suffering of a young boy placed in a Victorian workhouse. This imaginative introduction fired the pupils up and enabled the teacher and teaching assistants to swiftly move them on through a series of increasingly challenging writing activities to extend their skills. Learning proceeded at a very fast pace, behaviour and attitudes to learning were excellent and pupils of all abilities made outstanding progress.

Behaviour and attitudes to learning in general in lessons and around the school are good. Pupils get on well with each other and participate well in whole-class learning activities and small group work. They also work well independently. Pupils with recognised behavioural problems were seen to be very well engaged by the learning activities they were given and well supported by teaching assistants, meaning their behaviour was good too.

The improving quality of teaching and learning has raised achievement in English but has had only a marginal impact on achievement in mathematics. The school is aware of this and has used a diagnosis of pupils' strengths and weaknesses in the 2011 tests to identify for teachers the areas of mathematics they need to focus on especially over the coming year. The mathematics coordinator has introduced new, systematic and consistent whole-school approaches to teaching numeracy. The amount of curriculum time available for mathematics has been increased.

A new marking policy was developed after the last inspection. This sets out the regularity of marking required and specifies consistent ways of providing written guidance to pupils about how they might improve their work. A new set of symbols to be used by adults checking pupils' work has been introduced so that pupils know, for instance, that a double forward slash symbol indicates where a new paragraph should begin. Positive comments praising the pupils' work are written inside a 'bubble' and areas for development are recorded alongside an arrow symbol. Teachers clearly work very hard at regularly marking pupils' work. About 10% of all pupils' written work was checked during the inspection and this showed it to be

diligently marked and corrected with copious written guidance given to pupils on how to improve. Teachers adhere closely to the requirements of the marking policy.

You are injecting rigor and consistency into the school's work which is already bringing about improvements. There is recent evidence that attendance is at last starting to improve and achievement in English has risen noticeably. Teachers are now meeting the expectation of them to provide a variety of short, active and fast paced lessons. Pupils clearly enjoy such approaches and were making good or outstanding progress in lessons where learning was like this. The local authority is providing additional external support to advise and monitor the progress the school is making and has provided headteacher induction training for you.

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

David Anstead
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise standards and improve achievement in English, mathematics and science by:
 - setting short, sharp and challenging tasks which keep pupils actively engaged in learning to ensure that all lessons move forward at the same pace as the best ones
 - providing pupils with clear and explicit guidance when marking their work on what they have to do next in order to improve.

- Ensure that leaders at all levels check much more closely on the pace of learning going on in lessons, to ensure pupils make more effective use of their time and so make better progress.