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Mrs Susan Poole
Headteacher
St Barnabas CofE Primary School
St Barnabas Road
Leicester
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Dear Mrs Poole

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Barnabas CofE Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 26 October 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the staff and pupils who met with me.

Since the last inspection, there have been a significant number of staff changes. Six teachers were appointed in September 2011 to cover four absences and to replace two teachers who have left the school. One of these new teachers is an assistant headteacher with responsibility for Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

As a result of the inspection on 15 December 2009, 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.

Rates of progress are improving throughout the school. The school's tracking data and work in books from last year show that pupils' progress has accelerated and the number of pupils who fall behind in Years 3 and 4 is decreasing. Pupils say they enjoy their learning. They talk enthusiastically about the opportunities available to them through the curriculum. Leaders have been effective in developing the quality of teaching by setting clear expectations of teaching, regularly reviewing the progress each pupil makes and providing bespoke professional development so that teachers' practice improves. However, the quality of teaching and the application of the curriculum are currently uneven across the school. Leaders are aware of these variances and accurately recognise the impact of the recent significant staff changes.

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Leaders are able to point out where additional professional development, coaching and mentoring from school leaders and the local authority are beginning to have an impact in re-establishing the consistency of provision.

Many, but not all, pupils know their targets and can talk about how to improve their work. However, in some lessons, pupils are less clear about what is expected of them because teachers are not clear in their guidance about what they want pupils to learn. In many lessons, work is well matched to the different ability levels found and little time is wasted. However, in some classes, work is not sufficiently well matched to the wide range of abilities and some activities contribute little to pupils' learning. Work in pupils' books is increasingly well set out. Presentation has improved and pupils are proud of much of the work they do. Where presentation falls below the teacher's expectation, comments are made through marking to encourage pupils to think more about how they lay out their work.

Science has a much more prominent position in the school curriculum and work in many books is of a high quality. Pupils enjoy their science work and talk enthusiastically about what they have learnt. Investigative science is much more commonplace and this is contributing well to pupils' understanding of different concepts and their ability to behave as scientists. Cross-curricular links with literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are improving. The science leader is an enthusiastic ambassador for the subject and organises activities that promote science in the curriculum. He has forged useful partnerships with other schools to develop projects that make learning relevant and fun. However, the subject leader is yet to take on any significant monitoring of the subject and so his understanding of the quality of science teaching throughout the school is based on limited evidence. The governing body have taken a role in further developing the profile of scientific enquiry with a regular governors' challenge. This involves pupils investigating one of a range of questions set by members of the governing body. Pupils enjoy this and demonstrate their ability to work well independently.

Leadership is stronger than at the last inspection. More responsibility is successfully delegated to middle leaders. Literacy and numeracy subject leaders have an increasingly accurate view of their subject, although this is more accurately based on the effectiveness of teaching and learning last academic year when their last significant monitoring took place. These leaders are providing increasingly effective support and guidance to colleagues, ensuring that the consistency and quality of provision in these subjects continues to improve. Middle leaders are increasingly involved in monitoring the progress that different groups of pupils make. Usefully, middle leaders work with teachers in identifying better ways of working with groups and individuals who are in danger of falling behind. It is clear that this support was effective last academic year and there are early signs that their mentoring is beginning to have an impact again in some parts of the school. Senior leaders have developed a secure view of the school's strengths and areas for development. The accuracy of their self-evaluation procedures has improved since the last inspection.

and this enables them to pinpoint their actions and interventions with increasing effectiveness. The local authority has provided good support and challenge to the school, particularly in supporting the development of particular phases and teachers. Their monitoring reports show a frank analysis of where improvements have been needed and staff say that the work they have done with local authority advisers has been useful in developing their practice.

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

Michael Sheridan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2009

- Improve pupils' attainment in science by:
 - ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to plan their own investigations and the means to record their results
 - making sure that all staff give enough time to this aspect of learning
 - appointing a science leader to oversee and lead the subject.

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 by:
 - raising staff expectations of the quality of presentation so that it is consistent in different year groups
 - using assessment more effectively to match work to pupils' needs
 - improving the consistency in planning lessons so that pupils are clear about the expectations for the success in their learning
 - ensuring that pupils in Years 3 to 6 understand their short-term improvement targets so that these are more meaningful to them.

- Develop a clear strategy for monitoring teaching and learning so that:
 - best practice is shared more effectively across the school
 - there is a clear plan and criteria for monitoring teaching and learning across subjects
 - staff improve their skills in observing and monitoring progress.