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2 November 2011

Mr Mead  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Mead

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of  
Abbotswood Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 1 November 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my particular thanks to pupils, staff and the vice-chair of the governing body for the helpful discussions.

The characteristics of the school are much the same as they were at the previous inspection. The numbers on roll have risen in most year groups following the closure of a local primary school. There are now two additional classes. During the last academic year, there was significant instability in staffing at the school; this has been resolved.

As a result of the inspection on 25 and 26 May 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.

Attainment at the end of Year 6 is average and broadly similar to that attained by pupils at the previous inspection. Mathematics test results in 2011 show good improvement compared with previous years. However, boys continue to perform significantly less well than girls in English and overall the proportions reaching the



higher Level 5 remain below average. The school experienced considerable movement of pupils into the school last year and data show that those who remained for the full four years made satisfactory progress from the end of Key Stage 1. Progress in mathematics speeded up last year and ensured that challenging targets were met. The well-focused teaching of mathematics and successful interventions in developing mathematical skills contributed well to this improvement. This was not the case in writing. The school's own assessments for pupils in Years 3, 4 and 6 reveal inadequate progress by too many pupils in their writing last year.

Attainment at the end of Year 2 is below average. Despite a good start being made in Reception and Year 1, this was not sustained in Year 2. The school has taken immediate action to rectify the situation and this group of pupils are receiving well-targeted support now they are in Year 3, to ensure they catch up the lost ground. Teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 has been significantly strengthened this year; indeed some of the most effective teaching was seen in these two year groups.

The school has implemented a range of strategies to accelerate pupils' learning. In particular, more opportunities are being provided for pupils to work together, sharing skills and solving problems. The opportunities to develop communication skills are frequent and considerable preparation goes into teachers' lesson planning to ensure that pupils' independence as learners is supported and their thinking is encouraged. This is beginning to bear fruit. Pupils' progress has been speeded up and is now good in many lessons and parts of the school but not consistently so. With some exceptions, pupils are now achieving well. Current work shows that pupils' skills in writing and mathematics are being developed securely and systematically. Encouraging independent learning is just as strong in the Early Years Foundation Stage as elsewhere. The well-resourced areas and continuous access to these for children encourages good learning and development.

Lessons are planned to ensure tasks set are suitably challenging given pupils' existing knowledge. Teaching is improving, with increasing proportions of good teaching being seen. Learning gets off to a quick start, and in most lessons, good questioning and other forms of checking by teachers spur learning on effectively. Behaviour is managed well and the pupils spoken with say that their lessons are rarely disrupted by misbehaviour. Pupils refer to the targets set for literacy and numeracy and talk about what specific skills they are aiming to acquire. Pupils speak positively about the enriching events the school provides, for example the discovery of the 'blob' and the detectives arriving. The use made by pupils of the learning walls and the spider progress charts is a strong feature in the lessons.

However, there are still inconsistencies between classes. While the best lessons have clear expectations for the wide range of abilities, this is not always the case. In particular, what is planned for the more able is not sufficiently challenging and not all teachers are clear about their aspirations for this group. There are good systems



in place for younger pupils, to ensure marking is helpful but older pupils found the marking to be too superficial for them to know the next steps in development.

Good work has taken place by school leaders to enhance the school's systems for assessment and target setting is both ambitious and achievable. Responsibility for pupils' progress is now shared across the school and teachers have a good understanding of what progress is expected from pupils and of what needs to be done to support each one to reach their targets.

The clarity of purpose and commitment is distributed well to all staff and the governing body. While priorities and success criteria for mathematics are well understood by staff, those set for English are too broad to tackle the deeper seated issues around pupils' achievements in writing and ensure higher attainment for the more able.

The local authority has supported the school well, notably in helping provide expertise and strong guidance in raising achievement in numeracy, and views the school as having satisfactory capacity to sustain further improvement. This inspection bears out that view. The impact of the work of leaders and the governing body can be seen in the improved provision, and the improving attitudes and attendance of pupils. The school has still to demonstrate that this is making a sustained improvement in pupils' achievements, particularly for the more able, and for all pupils in their writing.

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

Jonathan Palk

**Her Majesty's Inspector**



## Annex

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

- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise their attainment, especially in mathematics, by:
  - ensuring that teachers record accurately the gains in knowledge and understanding that pupils have made
  - using these records to set pupils precise next steps in learning
  - sharing these next steps with pupils to involve them in their own learning, when marking work, ensuring that teachers refer to these next steps so that pupils understand how to improve their work.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching, so that it is consistently good or better, by:
  - reducing the length of introductions to lessons so that pupils can spend more time carrying out tasks that involve them in learning
  - ensuring that pupils are consistently given work that matches their particular needs and abilities, especially those of higher ability.