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Mrs Helen Daniels
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Daniels

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Cookham Rise Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 3 November 2011, for the time you gave to our discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to your pupils and staff who made time to meet me.

Since the last inspection, two senior teachers have left the school and a deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2011. These changes have resulted in significant differences to the structure and running of the senior leadership team. In addition, two new teachers have joined the school to create two job shares.

As a result of the inspection on 26 and 27 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 good progress in making improvements, and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Each year children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with varying skills and, in general, make better progress as a result of improved provision. The current children in Reception entered with broadly age-expected skills. However, in personal, social and emotional development and many areas of problem solving, reasoning and numeracy, their skill levels are above those expected. The unvalidated data in 2011 indicate that pupils taking the Year 6 examinations left school having made



satisfactory progress while reaching broadly average attainment. Consequently, achievement for this group of pupils was satisfactory. This represents a significant improvement on the previous year, particularly in the case of the more able pupils.

Overall, pupils now have a much better learning experience on a day-to-day basis. As a result of improved teaching, assessment procedures and pupils being more actively involved in their own achievements, current progress is accelerating, although a few inconsistencies remain. In science and reading, a large number of pupils now make better progress. The school can point to significant examples where in numeracy and literacy, pupils have made rapid progress as a result of focused interventions.

Changes to pupil progress meetings have been developed so that adults have a clearer picture of pupils' needs and the appropriate interventions required to accelerate progress and address past underachievement. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers.

In science, pupils are now engaged in scientific enquiry during lessons. They are regularly planning and developing their own scientific experiments, working with practical equipment and collaborating in small groups. As one pupil said, 'Science is so much more fun now and I am learning loads!'

In mathematics, 'cross-phase sessions' have been introduced to pupils in Key Stage 2 to provide extended opportunities to develop pupils' problem-solving skills. Improved planning and 'provision maps' have helped adults to target the needs of individuals more effectively. This, along with stronger transition arrangements between year groups, has contributed to the positive impact on pupil outcomes.

The teaching observed during the inspection was good overall. In the strongest lessons, teachers ensure that pupils are fully engaged in their learning by providing stimulating and interesting contexts in which to learn. Pupils are clear about the focus of each lesson, the success criteria are shared with pupils and past assessments inform the planning. Tasks set are challenging, including those for the more able. A swift pace of learning, good teacher questioning and regular opportunities to discuss questions support pupils well in extending their learning. Teaching assistants work effectively with pupils during group work activities to engage and develop their understanding of new concepts. Pupils are encouraged to assess their own progress through 'learning ladders' and a 'traffic light' system. On a few occasions, the pace of learning is slower and teaching assistants are not always used so effectively during the introduction to lessons.

Where marking is particularly strong, such as in writing, it provides pupils with clear steps on how to improve their work and opportunities to respond to teachers' comments. The school is aware that this good practice needs to be embedded across the school. Pupils talk about their targets, particularly in literacy, but are less sure of them in mathematics.



The headteacher and senior leadership team have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Within a short period of time, the new senior leadership team has established a shared culture of openness amongst staff and provided a clear direction for all. A 'raising attainment plan' clearly identifies the school priorities and is focused on the impact of school initiatives on pupil outcomes. A regular cycle of monitoring opportunities has been established, with subject leaders focused on evaluating the impact of initiatives. Consequently, there are marked improvements in the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. More consistent moderation in mathematics, the introduction of a new tracking document in science and improved progress meetings are beginning to raise expectations amongst all staff and improve achievement. These changes have led to challenging targets being set and a modified curriculum which better engages pupils and targets individual needs. The school is now building on the improvements to data analysis to provide an even clearer overview of the progress that different groups make for further tailoring provision.

The impact of the support from the local authority has been good, particularly the help given to teaching assistants to engage pupils in their learning, developing the leadership capacity through the introduction of the 'raising attainment plan' and through carrying out joint monitoring activities and lesson observations.

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

Susan Gadd

Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

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

- Raise achievement in mathematics and science by:
 - providing pupils with better opportunities to test out their ideas and carry out independent investigations.

- Strengthen the quality of teaching further so that it is consistently good by:
 - ensuring a brisk pace to lessons to provide more challenge to pupils, especially the more able
 - making better uses of assessment and pupils' individual targets to enable pupils to contribute more fully to their learning
 - monitoring with greater sharpness through lesson observations how the quality of teaching impacts on pupils' learning and progress.

- Develop the capacity of leaders to monitor more robustly the performance of pupils as they move up year groups by:
 - analysing assessment data more effectively to adapt the curriculum and set more challenging targets for pupils
 - ensuring new initiatives are sharply evaluated to demonstrate impact on pupils' learning and progress.

