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17 November 2011

Mr M Turner  
Headteacher  
Durham Gilesgate Primary School  
Kepier Crescent  
Gilesgate  
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Dear Mr Turner

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Durham Gilesgate Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 15 November 2011, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the staff, Chair of the Governing Body and the school's education development adviser for talking with me.

Staffing has strengthened since the last inspection, particularly in the school's senior leadership. A new deputy headteacher and a new leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage have taken up their posts, both joining from other schools.

As a result of the inspection on 1 and 2 July 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' achievement is improving. Evidence from all six lessons observed during the inspection, analysis of school data and work in pupils' books indicate improving progress for all groups of pupils, and especially for those boys and girls who were underachieving previously.

By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the attainment of children remains below the levels expected for their age. Pupils' progress in reading in Key Stage 1 is accelerating so that the gap between their attainment and the national average is narrowing. Progress of pupils in Years 1 and 2 is slower to improve, in both writing and mathematics, so the gap remains. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment closer to the national average in both reading and mathematics, but remains lower for writing. During the inspection, pupils' progress in all lessons was never less than satisfactory and in the large majority of lessons it

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was better than expected. Pupils worked hard, behaved well and responded well to teachers across the school.

School leaders have put in place several measures to achieve greater consistency in the quality of teaching. All teachers, without exception, have responded positively to support and the increased opportunities for professional development. Tailored mentoring is proving successful. As a result, there are raised expectations in terms of what all pupils can achieve. Teachers' marking is diligent and they now use the assessment information routinely to plan the next steps in pupils' learning, focusing strongly on those pupils who continue to underachieve. Ably guided by the school's senior leaders, all teachers have good opportunities to share and develop their best practice, within a supportive framework.

The drive for more accountability is evident at all levels because of improved leadership. School leaders are driving forward improvements in pupils' and teachers' performance. Self-evaluation is now robust, supported well by the local authority, whose officers provide pertinent advice to the school. This has led to greater purposefulness in the performance of school staff. Pupils of all abilities are responding well to paired and collaborative work, and to teachers' more effective questioning. Paired work and self-assessment are beginning to impact on their levels of participation and independence, as are the improved arrangements for homework and reading at home. While there is much greater consistency of practice across the school, the measures taken are not embedded.

As a result of improved arrangements to assess pupils' progress, the tracking of pupils' performance gives greater attention to individuals who are in danger of falling behind and underachieving. Interventions are more carefully planned and evaluated, and all staff are much clearer about what they are doing in support of individuals and groups. Some of these steps are relatively new and are yet to be evidenced or sustained in pupils' attainment across all strands of literacy and numeracy.

The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved, and this results in better provision. Consequently, all children's progress is improving from entry into the nursery until they exit the Reception class. An increasing number are now making accelerated progress as they move into Key Stage 1. This is well-evidenced through the newly introduced assessments and learning journals for each child.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely,

Henry Moreton  
**Additional Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Achieve greater consistency in the quality of teaching, especially in literacy and numeracy, to accelerate rates of progress by:
  - raising expectations of all staff of what pupils can achieve
  - making better use of assessment information in lesson planning and marking to ensure that all pupils are provided with activities that stretch them
  - systematically sharing the good practice that exists in the school.
  
- Sharpen whole-school approaches to improve the quality of learning by:
  - developing more focused techniques to monitoring the impact of action taken to raise achievement
  - increasing the rigour of self-evaluation to ensure that all initiatives have the intended impact in raising achievement.
  
- Improve the drive and effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure a clear focus on helping all children to make at least good progress and achieve well in their learning.