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1 December 2011

Miss Crellin
Headteacher
Southbrook Infant and Nursery School
Hawke Road
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Dear Miss Crellin

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Southbrook Infant and Nursery School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 29 November 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 members of the governing body, staff and pupils who contributed to the inspection. I note that the school is now federated within the Danetre and Southbrook Learning Village of schools.

As a result of the inspection on 7 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.

Verified teacher assessments at the end of the 2010/11 academic year confirm that a trend of improvement has been sustained since the last inspection, with pupils at the end of Year 2 attaining average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Scrutiny of pupils' writing, observation of literacy lessons and discussions with staff indicate that despite a strong focus on the teaching of phonics, standards in literacy will not be as high this academic year. This is because the current Year 2 has a greater proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/disabilities, an increasing number of pupils who spoke little or no English when they joined the school, and a legacy of underachievement in literacy development. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 promote writing across a range of learning experiences to ensure achievement is at least satisfactory. However, pupils do not always punctuate simple sentences accurately, and weak letter formation means that very few are beginning to develop a neat cursive style of handwriting. This is because they do not have enough opportunities to consolidate their writing skills in lessons, and teachers'

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marking in Year 2 does not always pick up pupils' mistakes and point out what they need to do next to improve.

Teachers and support staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage now place much more emphasis on the development of early literacy skills. Observation of learning in the Reception classes confirms that these children are developing good knowledge of letter sounds and are starting to write simple words in the many writing experiences planned for them. Teachers in both key stages plan key questions to be asked in each teaching activity. This ensures all staff participate in the effective development of learners' speaking and listening skills within the context of stimulating cross-curricular activities such as persuading people to come on their 'pirate ship' in Year 1, or locating facts about a famous British pop group from the sixties in Year 2.

Learners' attitudes towards learning in all classes are good. Relationships between adults and learners, and among learners themselves, are very positive and behaviour is good in lessons. A drive by the new headteacher to tackle unauthorised absence has been successful. This, combined with the development of a more stimulating curriculum in Key Stage 1 to mirror that in Reception, has led to improvement in attendance to average levels. Discussion with some parents and carers confirms that their children are keen to come to school and they now see good progress being made in reading.

Overall the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good features. Good teaching and learning are evident in the Nursery and Reception classes as a result of effective leadership of this key stage, detailed planning and better provision. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory but some less effective teaching still remains. This is because some teachers have a tendency to talk too much, work is not always closely matched to the ability of all pupils in the class, and resources are not used well to enhance the learning experiences for all pupils.

Leaders have made effective use of staff expertise and enthusiasm to tackle the issues from the last inspection. Teamwork is a growing strength within the school and senior leaders demonstrate the drive and passion to raise standards. Teaching and learning are monitored frequently by senior leaders to identify strengths and weaknesses. This information is used well to support self-evaluation and school improvement. Federation with the adjacent junior and secondary schools is strengthening the school's capacity for further improvement. All schools now share expertise and resources to provide greater levels of consistency in the management of policies and procedures. Joint arrangements for governance and the appointment of link governors ensure clear lines of accountability between school leaders and the governing body. The local authority has been both supportive and effective in working with staff to improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and raise standards.

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

Philip Mann
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise standards in reading and writing in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 by:
 - ensuring that the quality of teaching is more consistently good in order to accelerate the pace of learning
 - using assessment information more effectively to plan stimulating and challenging activities for pupils of all abilities
 - consolidating recently introduced initiatives in reading and writing so that they have a positive impact in driving up standards
 - ensuring teachers improve their questioning technique to challenge pupils' thinking and encourage their communication skills throughout.

- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by involving more staff and governors in decision making and evaluation of improvement.