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Mrs Langson
Headteacher
Uphill Primary School
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Dear Mrs Langson

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Uphill Primary 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 thank the pupils, the vice chair of governors and the representative of the local authority for the time they gave for discussions.

Since the last inspection, there have been no significant changes to the main characteristics of the school but there have been several staff changes. In June 2011 the school's provision for teaching English was judged to be good following a subject survey inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 13 and 14 July 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter. This monitoring inspection focused on mathematics, a key area identified in that inspection.

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.



In the most recent national tests, the attainment of pupils in Year 6 was well above average in English and average in mathematics. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 was above average in English and average in mathematics. Attainment of pupils in Year 2 was overall above average; higher in mathematics than English. The school is successful in supporting its most vulnerable pupils, some of whom have complex special educational needs and/or disabilities. They make good progress.

The recent English survey-inspection judged pupils' progress in English to be good. Progress in mathematics is more variable ranging from inadequate to good. Following the successful development of the provision for English, the school is now concentrating on raising pupils' achievements in mathematics. The school's own analysis of pupils' performance in mathematics has identified that their understanding of mathematical concepts was not being developed systematically enough and there were some gaps in learning. In particular, weaknesses were identified in the way number concepts were taught. Strategies to overcome this were considered by staff at a recent in-service training event.

In discussion with the inspector, Year 6 pupils were able to explain clearly the mathematics that they had been learning recently. Behaviour in lessons is mostly good though occasionally in whole class sessions some pupils lose concentration. Most pupils enjoy their work and willingly take part in their activities.

Teaching of mathematics is satisfactory and improving. Senior leaders' monitoring shows that there are now more good lessons. In the lessons observed during the inspection there were strengths in teaching during discussion sessions where pupils were developing their capacity to complete mental calculations, for example using multiplication and factors of numbers. Teachers asked good questions which required pupils to think carefully and explain their answers. Improvements in ongoing assessment of pupils' progress in mathematics are enabling teachers to plan lessons in more detail. There are good examples of planning which have clear links to the level at which pupils are working and their targets. Pupils' work is regularly marked, often with comments about how they can improve. Teachers make it clear at the start of lessons what the key learning will be.

Some weaknesses remain in mathematics lessons.

- There is sometimes a lack of precision in teachers' use of mathematical terms and vocabulary.
- Pupils' paired discussions are not always effective in improving learning.
- Instructions to pupils are not always clear enough when they are involved in their independent tasks.



- Some independent tasks lack the potential to promote good learning for all pupils in order to develop sound mathematical knowledge and skills at a good pace.

There is now greater attention given to helping pupils apply their mathematical knowledge. Pupils in Year 5 and 6 were using mathematics as part of a project on fairgrounds which also involved making working models of rides. In discussion with the inspector pupils described how they had worked out the relative costs of coaches from different firms to go on a visit.

Several aspects of the school's work are helping to develop a better capacity to improve. Senior leaders have a good understanding and knowledge of the progress that individual pupils are making. Information from assessment is used effectively in regular pupil progress meetings involving class teachers. The school development plan focuses appropriately on the key areas that will raise pupils' performance. Regular progress reports to the leadership team and governors provide valuable information about how well the school is moving towards school development targets. Governors are knowledgeable and well informed. Management teams oversee different areas of the school's work and this increases all teachers' knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. These teams also ensure a wider involvement of all staff in school development. The local authority has provided satisfactory support to help the school improve.

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

Daniel Towl
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

Areas identified in the last inspection.

- Improve and accelerate the learning and progress of all pupils, particularly in mathematics by:
 - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - making more consistently better use of assessment information to set and modify activities in lessons to meet the needs of individual pupils and challenge them all to do their best
 - making clear what pupils are going to learn in lessons, especially in Years 1 and 2
 - making better use of questions to deepen pupils' understanding and make pupils think more carefully
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in real-life contexts
 - developing teachers' confidence and skills in teaching mathematics.

- Sharpen school improvement planning by:
 - focusing priorities on key targets which will improve pupils' progress
 - extending the confidence and capacity of leaders and managers at all levels to make a stronger contribution to self-evaluation and strategic planning.