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Abigaile Robertson
Headteacher
Rush Green Junior School
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Dear Mrs Robertson

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Rush Green Junior 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 pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and to the senior leaders and middle leaders who spoke with me.

Following the previous inspection the acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher were appointed to the substantive posts. In October the deputy headteacher left. A senior teacher from another school has been seconded as one of two assistant headteachers. The secondment has been secured until July 2012. Four teachers have been promoted to the newly established middle leadership team. They each lead a year group. A newly qualified teacher joined the school in September. Pupil mobility is increasing as a result of growing numbers of children in parts of the borough. A new dining hall and music room have opened since the previous inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 20 and 21 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 inadequate progress in making improvements and inadequate progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.



Attainment overall is broadly average. There has been a slight improvement in English. Attainment has remained static in mathematics. However, pupils are not achieving as well as they should and make significantly less progress than expected during their time at the school, particularly in mathematics. Learning and progress seen in lessons, and the school's own pupil tracking information, show that there are inconsistencies between year groups and subjects. Although there is some evidence of progress being accelerated, for example in writing in Year 6, this does not sufficiently address the legacy of previous underachievement.

The quality of teaching is variable so the pace of learning and level of challenge provided for pupils, including the more able, is inconsistent. The school's monitoring records and a recent external review show that the target of 80% good or better lessons has been missed. In the lessons and work seen, pupils' progress was accelerated when the teaching maintained a good pace through challenging questions. Well-structured, demanding tasks were focused on clear learning objectives that were carefully matched to pupils' different abilities and supported by clearly defined targets for improvement for pupils. In these most effective lessons, pupils were encouraged to develop and explain their ideas. Good use was made of subject-specific vocabulary by adults and pupils alike.

These features are not evident in all lessons. The pace of learning and work that is well matched to pupils' abilities remain too variable to accelerate progress and raise achievement consistently. Where lessons are less effective, learning is slowed by too much teacher direction and a lack of classroom organisation. For example, when resources are not ready, pupils sit waiting for too long before starting tasks, and this interrupts learning. Too often in the lessons observed with the headteacher, teachers were not consistently vigilant in monitoring the learning of all pupils throughout the lesson. Opportunities were missed to correct misconceptions and pupils were not moved on to the next steps quickly enough when they understood the concept.

Pupils' comments reflect these inconsistencies. They say that work is more challenging in English than in mathematics. They understand the levels they are working at and what they need to do to improve through the use of targets in English, but this is not yet established in mathematics.

Leadership has been strengthened appropriately by the substantive headteacher, who has established a culture of reflection and an openness to change for improvement. A team of middle leaders has been established, and they are being trained with senior leaders to develop their skills. They understand their roles and responsibilities and that these are linked to improving teaching and learning. However, their roles are relatively new. Consequently, although they have undertaken some relevant monitoring activities, they are not yet able to demonstrate their impact on sustained improvement in teaching, learning and pupils' achievement.



Appropriate assessment, tracking and monitoring procedures are established and used to identify pupils who are not making the progress expected. This is informing regular meetings between senior leaders, middle leaders and class teachers so that strategies can be shared and appropriate interventions identified. However, middle leaders are still developing their understanding of how to use data effectively to support their work.

Systems have been put in place to ensure statutory policies are checked and reviewed when necessary. Regular reports from the school's leaders to the governing body support the monitoring of their implementation. The school development plan includes most of the relevant key priorities for improvement. It takes a view over three years and activities are clearly costed. A few quantifiable measures of success are defined but these are limited. Others are too vague to effectively support governors and senior leaders in evaluating the pace of improvement.

Leaders have actively sought external support from a consultant and the local authority. This has contributed to raising awareness of the features of good teaching and learning, but is not embedded in practice across the school.

Governors recognise that progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning has not been consistent or rapid enough. Consequently, there is limited evidence of the impact of actions to demonstrate that the school has built a better capacity for sustained improvement.

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

Jackie Krafft
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that at least 80% of lessons are good by May 2011 by:
 - ensuring that the pace is suitably brisk and pupils are more involved in their own learning
 - ensuring that work is matched to pupils' abilities, especially for the more able.

- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - urgently undertaking recruitment processes and appointing a substantive headteacher
 - ensuring that statutory policies are checked for clarity and implemented more rigorously
 - ensuring that the development plan takes a longer-term view and is fully costed.