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Mrs Brooks
Headteacher
Speenhamland Primary School
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Dear Mrs Brooks

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Speenhamland 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 pass on my thanks to the Chair of Governors and school improvement manager as well as to your pupils, who gave me good insight into life in the school.

Since the last inspection, the school has experienced a number of changes, as well as a restructuring of both middle and senior management. Staffing is now stable following the appointment of a second deputy headteacher and four new classroom teachers in September 2011.

As a result of the inspection on 11–12 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.

Pupils' attainment at the start of Key Stage 1 is broadly average. School data and



the unvalidated results for 2011 show that attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 has fallen significantly. It was significantly low in English and below average in mathematics. Consequently, progress for most pupils in Years 5 and 6 was inadequate, although it was at least satisfactory and sometimes good for those in Reception and Key Stage 1. Since September 2011, senior leaders have put in place some actions to remedy this. School data and evidence from books show signs that progress is beginning to improve in both English and mathematics, with increasing proportions of pupils starting to make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 2. However, progress is inadequate overall because it has not accelerated sufficiently to make up for past underachievement, in particular for pupils in Years 5 and 6.

The quality of teaching and learning is improving but it is too variable across the school. Monitoring of teaching, while accurate, has focused too much on teaching methods and not enough on how well pupils are learning. Teaching is most consistent in Reception and at Key Stage 1, where the good practice seen during the visit is being shared and built upon. For example, when teachers use a range of approaches, such as paired and group work, and information and communication technology to engage pupils and promote learning. Recent efforts to improve the quality of teaching at Key Stage 2 are beginning to result in more consistent practice, such as in questioning, planning and the use of assessment. However, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve remain too low and the pace of learning too slow. Pupils in the specialist resource unit participate fully in lessons and are well supported by the teaching assistants. Pupils behave well; they say they enjoy school and feel safe, which is reflected in their above-average attendance.

Assessment practices, while improving, vary in their effectiveness. Marking has improved and all teachers now consistently mark pupils' work and usually provide them with helpful comments on how to improve. In some instances, teachers set additional learning challenges which most pupils do. However, these and other comments are rarely followed through by teachers. All pupils now have personal learning targets in both literacy and numeracy, which they are beginning to use to support their learning. However, teachers do not consistently capitalise on these and pupils' numeric targets when lesson planning, checking pupils' learning in lessons to inform planning and while assessing their work. Good practice was seen during a short visit to a mixed Year 5 and 6 literacy lesson, when the teacher effectively enabled pupils to review their own learning and be aware of the progress they had made. This raised self-esteem by enabling them to reflect on the progress they had made and prepared both the teacher and pupils well for the next lesson.

Teaching teams at each key stage are working together to develop a new curriculum; however, this is still at an early stage. Pupils' cultural understanding has improved as a result of specialised staff training and an increased focus through topic-based lessons that are taught mainly in the afternoons. Opportunities for extended writing or mathematical problem solving in topic or themed work remain underdeveloped. In planning lessons, all teachers now consider what pupils will learn and how they will approach meeting the differing needs of pupils within lessons. However, there is a lack of precision in identifying what pupils of different ability



groups and individuals will learn. This is due, in part, to the lack of detail in the developing curriculum to underpin and support planning to meet the full ability range, in particular for higher-attaining pupils. As a result, the progress made by different groups of pupils within classes is uneven, as observed in several lessons during the inspection.

All staff are committed to improving the outcomes for all pupils, and the newly appointed literacy and numeracy coordinators are beginning to consider how they will raise achievement in their areas. However, data about pupils' attainment and progress have not been used effectively to identify and tackle underperformance rapidly enough. This, though, is starting to improve through more regular assessments. Governors recognise that while supporting the school they have not offered sufficient challenge at times in relation to pupils' performance. A new development plan is in place which is focused on raising achievement. However, it lacks detail on how actions will be implemented and impact evaluated in relation to measurable outcomes for pupils. The new senior leadership team is the key driver for improvement and its actions are focused on raising attainment; however, these are too recent to demonstrate secure and significant improvement.

The local authority, having recognised the pupils' underachievement in the last academic year, has put in place additional support for the school. This includes consultant advice for subjects and reviews of key areas, including mathematics and governance.

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

Angela Corbett
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

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

- Accelerate the rate of pupils' progress, especially in mathematics, by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practice using mathematical skills
 - ensuring work is always challenging.

- Improve teaching so that it is of consistent good quality by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - quickening the pace at which pupils work
 - ensuring that marking show pupils how to improve their work.

- Develop the curriculum by ensuring that:
 - there is greater challenge for higher-attaining pupils
 - pupils have more opportunities to know, understand and experience cultures other than their own.