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30 November 2011

Mrs Vickers
Headteacher
Woodhouses Voluntary Primary School
Ashton Road
Woodhouses
Failsworth
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M35 9WL

Dear Mrs Vickers

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Woodhouses Voluntary 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 pass on my thanks to the pupils, parents and carers and the member of the governing body to whom I talked or who provided evidence for the inspection.

The inspection of 17 and 18 May 2010 reported that the school had experienced a period of severe instability in staffing that had hindered its development and affected its performance. Since then, the school has enjoyed greater stability in its staffing.

As a result of the previous inspection, 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.

The attainment of pupils who left Year 6 to start their secondary education in September 2011 was broadly average in English and mathematics. This represented satisfactory progress over their time at Woodhouses. However, this cohort of pupils was one that had been affected by the instability in staffing mentioned above. The school's records of pupils' progress for the current Year 6 pupils indicate nearly all pupils to be making expected, or better than expected, gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. The few pupils, who are not progressing as quickly as others, are all identified as having difficulties that helps explain their slower current progress. They are receiving extra help.

Pupils made good progress in the lessons observed, particularly in mathematics in Years 5 and 6, where the indications are that pupils are gaining in confidence in mathematics and are making up any lost ground. The strengths in pupils' personal development recognised in

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the May 2010 inspection report have been maintained. Indeed, during the inspection, pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning and to each other were generally outstanding, an improvement over that recorded by the previous inspection team.

The good progress seen in lessons was the result of good and sometimes outstanding teaching observed during the inspection. The quality of teaching observed appears to have improved since the last inspection, where it was judged to be broadly satisfactory. Most of the areas for improvement from the previous inspection were related to teaching quality. Teachers have taken advantage of the increased stability in staffing to focus hard, as a team, to respond to each area of improvement. They have done this successfully in most respects, despite the restrictions on space and flexibility imposed by the severely limited accommodation. Teaching strategies are embedded and consistent from class to class; pupils of all abilities are challenged both to answer questions in class and in the level of work they are given to do. Also, a huge effort has been made to find, discuss and adopt what is best practice from other schools within the local authority and from within the existing staff. Parents and carers spoken with were aware of the extent to which staff were now engaged in professional development and believed they could see further improvement in a school of which they were already proud. The degree to which the school listens to and responds to the views of its pupils has developed further from an already high base. For example, the practice of pupils assessing their work and that of their classmates and in determining whether they need more time to master new ideas is now fully established in all classes. Further, in response to pupils wanting to spend more time with children of their own age – all classes have mixed year groups – the school's timetable was modified to facilitate this. Some work is yet to be completed. Although pupils' topic books showed that writing skills are developed in other subjects, there was little evidence to suggest that numeracy skills were practised outside mathematics lessons. The quality of pupils' presentation in their workbooks was not always as high as it might be. There were shortfalls in teachers' marking of pupils' work, particularly as suggestions to pupils and corrections were not often followed up.

Teaching is benefitting from improved leadership and management. The headteacher and deputy headteacher continue to form an effective team; they have focused well on dealing with the areas for improvement identified by the previous inspection. Increased stability of staff is leading to increased delegation of responsibilities to teachers, leaving the headteacher freer to oversee the performance of the school. The quality of teaching and the progress of pupils are monitored rigorously, in particular, to identify where intervention may be needed for pupils who appear to be falling behind. Moreover, teachers' morale is good and they work together more cohesively, freely sharing new ideas. Accountability has improved. All teachers are aware that they need to demonstrate that pupils are making good progress and adjust each of their lessons in response to how pupils' learning develops. The governing body provides challenge to the school's leaders over performance, continuing the development recorded by the previous inspection team. Leaders and managers are fully aware that pupils have yet to demonstrate the better outcomes in terms of higher standards. However, the evidence of this inspection suggests that the school has been

successful in improving the prerequisites of higher standards for pupils in improving the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of leadership and management.

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

Brian Padgett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise pupils' achievement by:
 - embedding strategies already introduced to facilitate increased progress in lessons
 - ensuring that challenge for pupils in the classroom is consistently high enough to enable them to reach the standards their ability warrants
 - building upon the successes of the 'Personal Learning Space' initiative to ensure that pupils focus even more closely on their targets
 - continuing to develop the curriculum so that pupils see the links between subjects, thus enabling them to reinforce their skills in literacy and numeracy in their lessons
 - sharing across the school the good practice observed to ensure that pupils take even more responsibility for their own learning and progress.