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7 December 2011

Mrs Whittaker
Acting Headteacher
Dovecot Primary School
Grant Road
Liverpool
Merseyside
L14 0LH

Dear Mrs Whittaker

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Dovecot Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 6 December 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. I would be grateful if you would please extend my thanks to the staff, the pupils with whom I met and to the Chair of the Governing Body and the representative of the local authority with whom I spoke.

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has retired. The school is currently led by an acting headteacher.

As a result of the inspection in 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 satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

In 2011, results for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 improved compared to the last set of recorded results in 2009. Improvement was stronger in English than in mathematics, and results in writing were stronger than those for reading. However, overall results remained well below average. Overall standards at Key Stage 1 also rose but were also well below average due to weaknesses in mathematics. In the majority of lessons observed during the monitoring inspection, pupils made good progress in their learning. The school's assessment data show that the progress made by pupils in their learning is increasing and that more pupils are now working at the levels expected for children of their age.

Following the previous inspection, the school concentrated on improving pupils' writing. Greater opportunities were provided for pupils to write in different genres and carry out more writing in other subjects. However, the focus on practising different types of writing in subjects, such as history, has placed some limits on the amount of subject specific

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information pupils are taught. Since the beginning of the academic year, the rate of improvement in other areas of the school's work has accelerated sharply. Attendance is rising and behaviour has been improved. The school has refocused its priorities appropriately on mathematics and on improving teaching and learning. Useful action plans for these areas and for English have been drawn up but these do not contain sufficient milestones by which progress in raising attainment and the quality of teaching can be measured. The school's timetable has been changed and extended to ensure a better balance between subjects. More time has been allocated to science which is now taught in greater depth. English and mathematics lessons have been extended and additional lessons introduced to develop basic skills in mathematics and reading.

The acting headteacher has introduced procedures for the regular assessment of pupils' learning and for more-robust analysis of data. These data provide a clearer picture of pupils' progress and of where underachievement lies. Consequently, additional adults have been suitably deployed so that they support more effectively less-able pupils and those who have fallen behind in their learning. Expectations of what pupils can achieve have been raised, partly due to the greater professional dialogue that is taking place in pupil progress meetings where data are analysed and strategies for tackling underachievement are agreed. This, and the clear setting out by the acting headteacher of what is expected of staff, has increased the accountability of teachers.

The monitoring of teaching and learning has become more rigorous. Teachers' planning and pupils' work are regularly checked. 'Learning walks' are carried out and the findings of these reported back to staff. Regular observations of teaching and learning have been undertaken with the help of the local authority and weaknesses in teaching have been robustly tackled. Staff meetings have concentrated on how to improve teaching and a number of teachers have visited another school to observe good practice in lessons. These initiatives have helped teachers provide pupils with more challenging work and to increase the pace of learning. Strengths in good teaching included good use of information and communication technology, sharply focused questioning, good behaviour management and good preparation of resources. Weaknesses in satisfactory teaching included some activities that were overcomplicated for pupils, insufficient challenge for more-able pupils, explanations that were not fully clear, too much teacher talk and plenary sessions at the end of lessons that were not long enough. Marking advises pupils of what they need to do to improve but the understanding by pupils of the National Curriculum levels at which they are working and are aiming towards is underdeveloped.

Satisfactory progress has been made in developing pupils' understanding of the multicultural nature of Britain. An action plan has been drawn up and a whole-school project undertaken that studied different local ethnic groups. Assemblies have been used to introduce and discuss different cultures existing within British society and a number of posters of prominent Britons of different ethnic heritage are displayed around the school. Links have been recently established with schools which have different pupil intakes. However, opportunities are missed, such as in history topics, to teach pupils about the contribution of different minority ethnic groups to British society.

The acting headteacher has made appropriate use of the local authority's services to accelerate improvement. It has provided good support to the school. A local authority officer who is also the School's Improvement Partner visits regularly and a mathematics consultant works closely with staff. The local authority has carried out a review of teaching and learning, provided extra funds and facilitated a link for the school's leadership with a headteacher of another school.

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

Michael McIlroy
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve attainment and accelerate the progress made by pupils in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 1 and 2 by ensuring that in all classes:
 - work is sufficiently challenging and enables pupils to build on their prior attainment
 - pupils have opportunities to improve their writing when working in subjects across the curriculum
 - lessons have a quick pace, with high expectations of what all groups of pupils can achieve.
- Ensure that pupils develop a good understanding of the multicultural nature of modern Britain.