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13 January 2012

Sian Pritchard
Deputy Headteacher
Huntingdon Primary School
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Dear Mrs Pritchard

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 January 2012, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to staff, members of the governing body, pupils, parents and carers who met with me during my visit.

Since the previous inspection, the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs and/or disabilities has fallen. There have been significant changes to the school leadership team with the appointment of a new deputy headteacher and an assistant headteacher about a year ago. The present headteacher is currently absent and was not in school for my visit. There have been several changes to the teaching staff since the previous inspection and a number of lengthy staff absences.

As a result of the inspection on 12–13 January 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.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' attainment and progress, particularly in English and mathematics, show no improvement since the last inspection. Results in 2011 at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 indicate attainment in both subjects is significantly below the national average for almost all groups of pupils. This reflects a continuing trend of low attainment over the last three years. Pupils' achievement in writing, especially, has

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been low for some time. Few pupils reached above average levels at the end of Year 2 or Year 6. However, in the last six months, there has been steady improvement. Evidence in pupils' work indicates attainment and progress is accelerating in most classes and for nearly all groups of pupils. Senior leaders have introduced a wide range of assessment strategies enabling teachers to have a much clearer picture of pupils' progress. The use of this in planning is proving to be more successful for the needs of middle and lower achievers, but is still not addressing sufficiently the needs of the more-able and gifted and talented pupils. School data confirms that most pupils are achieving better and reaching higher levels of attainment, but it is too early to judge whether this upward trend can be maintained. Staffing is now more stable and has helped improve pupils' progress, and pupils have enthusiastic attitudes to learning and behave well in classes.

The quality of teaching

The school has taken effective action to develop much greater consistency in teachers setting clear learning objectives in lessons. All teachers try to ensure that pupils understand clearly what the purpose of their learning is, and they question pupils carefully to check their understanding. However, this sometimes leads to overlong teacher input at the start of lessons, which a number of pupils commented upon. There is some improvement in teachers' marking which, although not entirely consistent in all classes, has resulted in a better balance of developmental and encouraging comments. Teachers are still in the early stages of setting individual learning targets for their pupils.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school remains a calm and friendly community where relationships are good between adults and pupils. Pupils are respectful and polite, cooperate well with each other and are developing good social and moral attitudes. They understand how to keep safe and have few concerns about bullying.

The quality of leadership and management of the school

The deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher have been rigorous in leading improvement in the monitoring of teaching and learning. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching throughout the school and have been effective in helping teachers, including mentoring newly qualified teachers, to improve their practice. This has been especially important at a time of considerable instability in staffing and has resulted in steadily improving the quality of teaching.

The governing body has developed effective monitoring systems and regularly challenges leaders about the school's performance. This is a significant improvement



since the previous inspection. The governing body has a good understanding of the school's needs and is adopting a very 'hands-on' approach. It has also fulfilled its statutory requirements with regard to community cohesion.

The school's partnership with parents and carers remains inadequate. Although a majority of parents and carers are satisfied with their involvement with the school, a significant minority remain unhappy with their contacts with the school. Leaders have taken some steps to reach out to parents and carers but this is not sufficient. Not enough parents and carers feel that they can confidently approach school leaders with their concerns or be more directly involved with the school and their children's education. Leaders and the governing body realise that they need to become more visible, approachable and available for parents and carers.

The school has benefitted strongly in the last two terms from the support and guidance of the local authority in helping it through difficult times. This has had a positive effect on supporting the senior leaders and managers in place at this visit. However, despite some key improvements, progress has been inadequate because the attainment of pupils has remained low for too long.

The inspection has raised very serious concerns. These will be considered by the appropriate Regional Director, Inspection Delivery, who will decide when the school will next be inspected.

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

Rod Braithwaite
Additional Inspector



Annex

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

- Accelerate learning and raise standards in English, mathematics and science by:
 - improving consistency in the use of assessment data to match learning to pupils' needs, particularly for able, gifted and talented pupils
 - ensuring that success criteria include clear learning outcomes for each lesson so that different groups of pupils know exactly what they are learning
 - ensuring marking and the use of targets enable all pupils to improve their work.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - improving the quality of monitoring processes by leaders so that they have greater impact on improving teaching and learning
 - improving the effectiveness of the governing body by ensuring that governors monitor the work of the school and give appropriate support as well as challenge to senior leaders
 - ensure that the school meets statutory requirements in relation to the promotion of community cohesion.

- Strengthen relationships with parents and carers by:
 - ensuring parents become more involved in their children's learning
 - having a stronger presence from the headteacher and senior leaders to meet parents informally in the mornings
 - systematically seeking parents' views to enable them to become more involved in decision making.

