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Miss J Smithson  
Headteacher  
Oulton Primary School  
Green Lea  
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Dear Miss Smithson

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Oulton Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 10 January 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Also, thank you to the pupils, governors and the local authority representative who spoke with me.

Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed together with four new teachers, each of whom started their post on 1 September 2011. Three of the new teachers are newly qualified. The assistant headteacher is currently acting as deputy headteacher. There was a significant amount of staff absence during the last full academic year. Changes have been made to some teaching assistant roles; these include the creation of a learning mentor post, a support post for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and a post which includes a responsibility for monitoring pupils' attendance. An additional full-time administrative post has been put in place. The local authority has appointed a new school improvement advisor to work with the school's senior leaders. Extensive building work is taking place to provide a purpose built, two form entry primary school on the existing school site. This is due for completion in July 2012.

As a result of the inspection on 22 September 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.

January 2012



## **Achievement of pupils at the school**

The results of the national tests for pupils in Year 6, in 2011, show that the level of attainment reached by pupils in English and mathematics declined significantly. These results continue a trend of declining attainment stretching back for five years at Key Stages 1 and 2. By these measures, standards are low. The progress made by pupils also declined and was below the nationally expected rates. Taken together, the attainment and progress outcomes are all below the government floor standards. Inspection evidence shows that pupils' below average attendance, variable and sometimes inadequate teaching, weak use of assessment to identify support and intervention and occasional disruption to pupils' learning due to poor behaviour, all contributed to pupils making inadequate progress in the academic year 2010/11.

The progress made by pupils since the beginning of this school year shows a significant improvement. Overall, school data show pupils making much better progress. In Year 6, outstandingly improved progress has been made in English and much improved progress in mathematics. Scrutiny of pupils' work carried out during the inspection confirms the improving rate of progress. In lessons seen by the inspector, pupils made at least satisfactory and sometimes good progress. Consequently, pupils are beginning to make up the lost ground of last year.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage children are making improved progress in developing speech and language skills. This is due to the increased emphasis the school now places on teaching phonics and the more-robust systems for assessing children's understanding and learning.

## **The quality of teaching**

The variable teaching of last year is being steadily improved. Pupils who spoke to the inspector say that lessons are more interesting and have fewer disruptions. Observations during this inspection confirm this improving picture. Of particular note is the improved planning for lessons which now clearly outlines the skills and knowledge that pupils are to learn. In lessons, teachers make good use of digital projection to illustrate the teaching points. This captures pupils' interest and they concentrate well. Behaviour, in lessons seen, was good. The increased emphasis on phonics in the Early Years Foundation Stage is matched by improved attention throughout the school to developing pupils' reading and writing skills. Teachers have received training to improve their delivery of this aspect of the curriculum and the quality of teaching, as a result, has improved. However, more improvement is needed to the pace of teaching and to the amount of progress expected in each lesson. Also, some teachers lack confidence in teaching mathematics. The use of assessment is improving both at whole-school level and at the planning stage of teaching. The use of assessment in an ongoing way in lessons to check on pupils' progress and understanding is inconsistent across classes and subjects. Similarly, the quality of marking is variable. Some improvement has been made since the last inspection, particularly due to a review of the school's policy for marking. Pupils say

that, although their work is marked regularly, it does not consistently help them to understand how to improve their work.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage the quality of teaching is improving especially during teacher-led activities, such as for phonics work and emerging writing skills. The organisation of child-led activities needs further improvement to provide greater structure and purpose to children's learning.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

During the last school year a significant number of pupils were excluded from lessons due to disruptive behaviour. Also, pupils' attendance was well below that which is expected nationally. It is not surprising, therefore, that some pupils made inadequate progress in their learning. Pupils say that behaviour is much improved and that disruptions to lessons are now relatively rare. Pupils rightly say that the staff are much more consistent in applying the school's behaviour policy. In particular, there is a better balance between the use of incentives and sanctions. The outcome of this improvement can be seen in the significantly higher rates of attendance in the autumn term 2011. Comparison with the same period in 2010 shows a 12% rise in attendance. Leaders' strategies to improve attendance are having a markedly good effect.

The school continues to safeguard pupils effectively and maintains a suitable single central register showing the appropriate checks made on school staff and volunteers.

### **The quality of leadership and management of the school**

The new headteacher leads the school with clear direction. She has the full support of the acting deputy headteacher and other senior staff. With the willingness of the hard working staff to embrace change, improvements are being achieved at an accelerated rate. The shortfalls in the school's performance last year are steadily being rectified. The governing body is determined to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils as seen by their resoluteness in re-advertising the vacant deputy headteacher post.

Many changes have been made by leaders in a short time and these need more time to have a full impact on pupils' outcomes. For example, the roles of middle leaders are much more focused on monitoring the school's work. A new tracking system is in place to chart pupils' progress. There is a renewed emphasis evident upon standards and the school's improvement plans focus more strongly on raising standards than previously. The local authority advisor is providing improved rigour to the improvement processes. The governing body is more aware of the urgency needed to improve the school but has not fully translated this into rigorous monitoring procedures.

Leaders are fully aware that the school made little improvement during the last academic year following the inspection. They have successfully turned the corner in the autumn term and the rate of improvement is quickly gathering pace. Nevertheless, there is much to do before pupils reach the necessary levels of attainment they will need to succeed at high school. In addition to the points for improvement identified at the last inspection the school should urgently make the following improvements:

- increase the consistency of good quality teaching
- fully implement the school's marking policy
- increase the regularity and rigour of the governing body's monitoring of the school's plans for improvement
- provide professional development for all staff in the teaching of reading, phonics and mathematics
- raise the rate of pupils' attendance
- improve the organisation and structure of child-led activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

John Coleman  
Her Majesty's Inspector

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2010**

- Raise pupils' attainment and accelerate progress, by:
  - increasing staff knowledge and understanding of how to develop speech and language in order to boost writing skills, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.
  
- Involving pupils more in assessing their own learning, especially at Key Stage 2, by:
  - ensuring that the marking policy is implemented consistently to inform pupils how to improve their work.
  
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching, by:
  - ensuring that all teaching matches the best practice found in the school
  - raising staff expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - increasing the pace of learning in lessons.