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Mrs M Binns
Headteacher
Ward Green Primary School
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Dear Mrs Binns

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Ward Green Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 18 January 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please thank also the pupils, members of staff and the local authority officer who gave time to meet and speak with me.

Since the last inspection, the school has changed operating on two sites to a single site and much rebuilding and refurbishment of the single site have taken place. There have also been significant changes in staffing, with many of the current staff being new to the school or to posts of responsibility at the school.

As a result of the inspection on 29 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 good progress in making improvements.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 or above in 2011 has increased in both English and mathematics since the last inspection. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 increased also. The proportion of pupils making the expected two levels of progress increased in both subjects. The pupils' average points score increased in mathematics, but fell slightly in English. The school's data show much-improved progress by pupils throughout the school. The data show also that the pupils' writing improves noticeably less than their reading and mathematics. The school data show good increases in outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

January 2012



The quality of teaching

The teachers use a range of methods consistently, which have been introduced as a result of well focused training and development activities. The methods are leading to faster rates of learning by the pupils. For example, the 'Steps to Success' are helping the pupils to understand more precisely what they have learned and what specifically they need to improve. As a result, the pupils understand better what they need to do, talk about having more control over their learning and are more confident as learners.

The teachers maintain a brisk pace in lessons by using a variety of activities well. For example, the pupils are given opportunities to discuss questions quickly in pairs before providing answers to the teachers. Such activities break up what would otherwise be quite lengthy sessions and so help to keep the lesson flowing, maintain the pupils' concentration and ensure that all pupils participate actively. Routinely, the pupils are provided with different tasks or materials adapted according to their different learning needs and the school makes use of mixed-age groupings for some reading activities, so that the pupils are working at an appropriate level.

The school's monitoring shows that the quality of teaching has improved. There is a greater proportion of lessons that are good or better. The pupils confirm that lessons are better than they used to be. They describe lessons as fun and interesting routinely. They say that they are finding the work challenging more often and that is reflected in the teachers' approach to planning lessons and tasks. For example, the teachers use the 'Steps to Success' to raise their own expectations of the pupils and the pupils' expectations of themselves. The way that the teachers question the pupils in lessons does not always ensure an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils, however, and the teachers do not always use what they discover about the extent of the pupils' learning to adapt the lesson as it progresses.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are provided with a good range of opportunities to learn independently. Most of the activities designed for them to do so are purposeful, but that is less obviously the case for outdoor activities. Nevertheless, generally, there are good links between the learning taking place indoors and the activities outdoors. The outdoor learning area allows for all areas of learning to be covered now. The children are provided with various opportunities to improve their writing skills and their writing becomes clearer and more structured as a result. While there are many activities that engage the pupils in speaking, the teachers' approach to developing the children's speaking skills is less clear than for writing. Generally, however, the children become more confident and articulate, though often from a low base level of skills.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The pupils enjoy learning and their enjoyment is increasing as a result of the school's work to improve the quality of teaching. They work well together in lessons and help each other to learn. Their willingness and good response to the teachers make an important contribution to the progress they make in lessons. Occasionally, when they are unclear about their work or the pace of the lesson is steady rather than brisk, a few of them lose concentration and become chatty when they should be listening.

The quality of leadership and management of the school

The school has made good progress in demonstrating better capacity to sustain improvements. There has been a significant expansion of the senior leadership team and greater delegation of responsibilities throughout the staff. That has been accompanied by a greater emphasis on teamwork, professional development, monitoring of the quality of teachers' work and discussions about how lessons are improving the pupils' progress and attainment. The changes have been implemented rapidly. The staff exhibit a strong sense of acting collectively. The result has been better teaching and greater consistency in teaching practice. The staff are entirely clear about the priorities for the school in terms of the pupils' learning and those in leadership roles understand their responsibilities well and carry them out thoroughly.

The school has used external support very well, both from the local authority and other sources. Work with neighbouring schools has resulted in more-accurate assessment of the pupils' progress and attainment and that has led in turn to improvements in the quality of teaching. Activities to check on the quality of the school's work are extensive, frequent and involve a range of leaders and managers. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and take effective action to bring about improvements. They are supported well by the governing body, which is involved actively in scrutinising the work of the school and prepared to ask searching questions. It has challenged the school to ensure that more pupils attain the higher levels in test results. However, in the national data on the pupils' attainment, it is only in mathematics that there is a clear and sustained trend of improvement, closing the gap between the school and the national average.

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

Clive Moss
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise standards in English and mathematics by:
 - improving consistency in the quality of teaching so that it is good or better in all classes
 - increasing the pace of learning in many lessons
 - planning tasks and providing support so that more-able pupils can work at a much more challenging level
 - establishing a consistent approach to involving pupils in understanding and planning their own learning methods.

- Improve children's outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - providing more opportunities for children to learn independently
 - ensuring that independent activities have a clear purpose for promoting children's learning and development
 - ensuring that children can extend all aspects of their learning and development in the outdoor area
 - providing more opportunities for children to develop their speaking and writing skills.

- Increase the capacity of the leadership team to accelerate improvement in standards by ensuring that more staff have the responsibility and skills for improving aspects of teaching and pupils' progress across the school.