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3 February 2012

Mrs O'Donnell
Headteacher
Clarksfield Primary School
Grasmere Road
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Greater Manchester
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Dear Mrs O'Donnell

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 2 February 2012, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. I am grateful to the Chair of the Governing Body and the representative from the local authority for sparing the time to talk with me. It was a pleasure to speak to the pupils, so please pass on my thanks to them also.

Since the last inspection, two deputy headteachers have left the school and one deputy headteacher has been appointed. Two class teachers have left and two assistant headteachers have joined. A sport and community development leader has been appointed along with a business manager. A new governing body has replaced the Interim Executive Board and a new leadership team has been established. Nine of the teaching staff are new to the age groups they are teaching.

As a result of the inspection on 31 January 2011, 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

Unvalidated results of the national assessments and tests in 2011 indicate that attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is significantly lower than the national averages. Key Stage 2 attainment has been steadily declining for the past five years and is significantly lower than expected with underperformance by all groups. Furthermore, the rate of progress made by pupils is insufficient and has declined over time to below levels evident at the time of the previous inspection. In 2011, the school did not meet the minimum standards expected for primary schools. Attainment and progress have not increased enough and the school is

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falling short of providing pupils with the experiences they need to catch up to where they should be. Current data held by the school indicate some successes in the progress made by some pupils. However, this is not consistent enough across the school and too many pupils are still making too little progress. The school has concerns with regards to the validity of internal data held for pupils' attainment, although work is developing in school to ensure data are accurate in the future through moderation meetings. 'Pupil progress meetings' are also developing, where underperformance is more readily identified and new intervention strategies are beginning to be implemented. However, as the school does not have confidence in the security of information about pupils' attainment, this work is having limited impact.

The quality of teaching

The school's monitoring of lessons indicates an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. However, this view is not supported by the inspector. Teaching and learning remain inconsistent and too much teaching is not good enough to enable pupils to make the progress required. Lesson observations during the inspection showed too little challenge placed on pupils and low expectations by the teachers. Assessments were not used to ensure pupils' needs were met and pupils lacked motivation to complete the work set. Pupils were unclear about their targets. The targets themselves did not always indicate what the pupils needed to achieve next. Teaching assistants provided little support and did not intervene as well as they might when pupils' concentration slipped. Marking of pupils' work in some cases enables pupils to move on with their learning, most noticeably in literacy. However, this is not consistently used and there are examples where marking simply affirms the efforts made by pupils and in some cases pieces of work remain unmarked. Much homework completed by pupils is not acknowledged by the class teacher. Interventions to help pupils catch up are improving. Previously taught programmes have been monitored to note impact and where they have not improved pupils' learning they are no longer used. New programmes are now used, but there is no evidence of the impact of this work. Training has taken place on how to teach letters and sounds and this has been extended into Years 3 and 4. However, there is little evidence that this work is improving pupils' reading skills. A consistent approach to the teaching of calculation skills has been adopted, but this is not showing sufficient impact on pupils' progress in mathematics. There is insufficient focus on improving pupils' basic skills and, overall, the quality of provision is not strong enough to ensure the accelerated progress that is needed so that pupils make the gains they require in their learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school continues to promote behaviour positively in school. As a result, pupils are polite and well-mannered and continue to be willing to discuss their experiences with adults. However, pupils' attitudes to learning are not always positive. In weaker lessons, their behaviour slips. There has been a wide range of strategies to encourage pupils to be involved in school life. This is a positive development and they respect their school environment and are now more involved in the local and wider community.

The quality of leadership and management of the school

The new leadership team is united in its approach towards school improvement. The team is aiming to put in place strategies to enable pupils to make better progress. However, there is very little evidence of how the senior leaders have improved outcomes for pupils, as the work is in its infancy. Action plans have been written based on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Position statements evaluate impact so far, but there is insufficient evidence to show how these actions have had a successful impact on the quality of teaching and learning or on levels of pupils' achievements. Senior leaders have carried out a significant number of lesson observations and, although areas to develop are identified, these have not been rigorously followed up to ensure teaching and learning improve. Currently, the senior leaders hold an over-optimistic view of the quality of provision.

Some members of the new governing body bring a wealth of useful expertise which is ensuring the senior leaders are being further held to account. Through recent training, provided by the local authority, they are gaining a more realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and they are aware there is much that needs improving.

The school has developed partnership working effectively. A sport and community development leader has been appointed and is overseen by a senior leader in school. He knows pupils, parents and carers and the local community well and is working to forge effective links to the benefit of the school and community and ultimately for the pupils. Effective partnerships have developed with a range of partners, for example the mosque, local high school and other primary schools. Adult learning has improved with increased opportunities for parents and carers to improve their own skills and learn how to support their children's learning. Newsletters have improved lines of communication and parents and carers are encouraged to observe learning in the classrooms. Successful bids to develop the school grounds and community have resulted in increased opportunities for pupils to engage in meaningful activities; for example, through developing gardening areas in the local community. There is a clear drive and commitment to develop partnership working.

The local authority has worked closely with the school. There has been effective training for the new governing body and bespoke training offered to the school. Furthermore, local authority officers have facilitated the support from other schools to support improvements at Clarksfield.

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

Jane Millward
Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2012

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2011.

- Accelerate progress and raise standards in English and mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2 by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to discuss their work and infer meaning from their reading material, particularly in the classes for older pupils
 - extending the Key Stage 1 strategies for learning letters and sounds into Years 3 and 4
 - implementing a consistent method of calculation throughout the school
 - securing pupils' knowledge of basic number concepts and mathematical vocabulary so they can make more rapid mental calculations.
- Build on the best practice found in the school to raise the overall quality and consistency of teaching and learning from satisfactory to at least good by:
 - further raising expectations of what pupils can achieve so they are always challenged and make more rapid progress
 - increasing pupils' involvement with learning, and providing more opportunities for independent learning and research
 - ensuring assessment information is used in all classes to set more tightly focused, individual targets to secure rapid and consistent progress.
- Build on existing partnerships with parents and carers and the community so all feel welcomed, included and valued partners in the life of the school.