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16 March 2012

Mrs Alison Whiting  
Headteacher  
Blenheim Primary School and Nursery  
Blenheim Road  
Orpington  
Kent  
BR6 9BH

Dear Mrs Whiting

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools with additional focus on behaviour:  
monitoring inspection of Blenheim Primary School and Nursery**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 15 March 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the members of staff and pupils who met me during the day.

The school has experienced significant changes in staffing since the previous inspection. Five teachers have left the school and new appointments have been made to replace them. One new member of staff has taken the role of leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

As a result of the inspection on 17 and 18 November 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 and sustaining improvements. The effectiveness of the school in improving pupils' behaviour is good.

**Achievement of pupils at the school**

The school's focus on raising attainment in writing had an impact on the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 last year. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 2 indicate that attainment in writing rose in 2011 so that average point scores were slightly above national averages for the first time in five years. Attainment in writing at the end of Key Stage 2 also rose. Work in pupils' books



confirms that teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects, such as history and science. The majority of teachers have consistently high expectations of their pupils when they use their writing skills.

Overall, attainment remained broadly average in English and mathematics in 2011. Progress made by pupils in Year 6 was satisfactory in English, but good in mathematics. The school's own analysis of performance data revealed that attainment in reading did not improve in 2011. As a result, school leaders have focused on the systematic teaching of sounds and letters (phonics) this year and have ensured that teachers devote more time to reading activities during the week. The school's tracking data indicate that these actions have a beneficial impact on reading standards across all classes.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching and learning observed during the inspection confirms the school's view that the proportion of good teaching is growing. However, school leaders are aware that teaching is not consistently good in all classes and in all subjects. They have taken action to improve practice in classes where teaching is typically satisfactory and are monitoring progress carefully. Across the school, teachers generally ensure that their pupils understand the learning objective of the lesson and regularly give them opportunities to share ideas with 'talk partners'. Classrooms are well ordered and bright and written prompts on 'working walls' support pupils' learning effectively. In the best lessons seen during the inspection, teachers planned activities that met the needs of all pupils, provided the right level of challenge and enabled them to make good progress in their learning. In contrast, satisfactory teaching did not make expectations clear and good intentions to make the lesson fun for the pupils were unfulfilled because the activities were not pitched at the right level.

A new marking policy has been introduced and there is evidence that most teachers now give clear guidance to pupils about how they can improve their work, particularly when marking writing. Pupils say that they find the 'next steps' comments useful. The use of targets is less consistent across the school and the work books from some classes show that progress in meeting targets for writing is not being tracked. School leaders have monitored the effectiveness of writing targets and have decided to make changes to the way targets for writing are recorded and assessed. The new system has been trialled, but has not been implemented fully.

The headteacher visits classrooms regularly to check on the quality of teaching and has invited officers from the local authority to carry out joint observations with her to validate her judgements. The headteacher and senior staff also review planning and look at pupils' workbooks to monitor the quality of teaching. They give very detailed written feedback to staff on how they could develop their practice, but teachers have not been given clear targets for improvement that are then followed up at the next observation.



## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

A new policy for managing behaviour is becoming embedded across the school and is applied consistently by all staff both in and out of the classroom. The number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced and behaviour in lessons and around the school has improved. Pupils say they really like the new 'traffic light' system because it is fair and rewards all pupils for good behaviour. As one pupil said, 'It rewards those of us who are good all the time too, not just those who improve.' In the lessons seen during the inspection, behaviour was good in almost all classes and pupils demonstrated a good attitude to learning. In the one lesson where behaviour was satisfactory, low-level chatter and some pupils' lack of focus on their work affected progress. Pupils show respect for adults and each other and cooperate well when sharing classroom resources and play equipment outside.

The school has been particularly successful in raising overall attendance to above average levels and reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent. The school's attendance officer has played a key role in this work. She notifies all parents and carers about the level of their children's attendance each term and alerts them if levels of absence are rising. Together with the headteacher and other senior staff, she has devised and implemented a range of initiatives aimed at rewarding good attendance. There is a weekly prize draw for those pupils with good attendance and punctuality and a competition for the house with the best attendance. Pupils who maintain full attendance for the year are rewarded with a treat and wear their '100% attendance badges' with pride. School newsletters celebrate success and ensure parents and carers understand the importance of good attendance.

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

The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has been successful in bringing about improvements since the previous inspection, particularly in raising attainment in writing and in improving attendance. The capacity of the leadership team has been strengthened by the recruitment of an experienced practitioner to a leading role in the Early Years Foundation Stage. School leaders have continued to refine assessment and tracking systems and monitor the progress of all groups of pupils rigorously, including the most able. Regular meetings with teachers to discuss the progress of pupils help to identify any who may be at risk of underachievement and to ensure that more pupils make good progress.

The school has worked closely with the local authority since its previous inspection. Support has been well targeted and has helped build the school's capacity for further improvement.



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  
Melanie Knowles  
Her Majesty's Inspector



## Annex

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

- Raise attainment in writing by:
  - developing teachers' use of marking and targets so pupils always understand exactly what to do to improve their writing and know the next steps in their learning
  - providing greater opportunities for pupils to practise the skills they have learned in literacy lessons when writing in other subjects
  - ensuring teachers always set high expectations whenever pupils use their writing skills.
  
- Accelerate pupils' progress by:
  - making better use of assessment information to ensure that lessons always challenge and engage pupils well, particularly the most able
  - ensuring that the checks all leaders make are thorough enough to secure consistently good or better teaching across the school.
  
- Improve attendance by:
  - ensuring that persistent absence is eradicated by working directly with the families of the very small number of pupils who are too often absent
  - promoting the importance of good attendance to all pupils and parents and carers and maintaining this approach as a high priority across the school.