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Mr Mike Dean
The Headteacher
Christ Church Primary School
Byng Road
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Dear Mr Dean

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 December 2007, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I am also very grateful to the governors and the pupils who spoke to me.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection in November 2006, the school was asked to:

- Raise standards for higher-attaining pupils.
- Develop robust leadership and management to promote improvement.
- Raise expectations of what pupils can do.
- Raise the attainment of pupils with learning difficulties.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Pupils enter the school with standards above average. Since the previous inspection standards have risen significantly at the end of Key Stage 1, particularly in mathematics. Standards are above average in writing and well above average in reading and mathematics. Able pupils reach higher standards in reading and mathematics than they do in writing. Senior leaders are targeting this through a whole school focus on improving writing, including supporting pupils to begin thinking about writing in the Foundation Stage. Standards in writing continue to improve.

By the end of Key Stage 2, standards have been improving steadily and are well above average in English and mathematics. Significantly more pupils attain the highest level in these subjects than found nationally. Standards in science are above

average. In English, the published data for the 2007 tests do not yet accurately reflect the standards pupils attained.

Given pupils' starting points they are now making good progress. Boys make very good progress. Through developing pupils' independent learning skills, senior leaders will target girls' to ensure that they make as much progress as the boys.

Senior leaders have undertaken training to ensure they are able to lead the school strategically and are providing good support in developing staff at all levels. They are well informed, enthusiastic and knowledgeable and have established robust systems to promote improvement in the school. There is variability in expertise amongst middle managers. This is being addressed through effective joint working in order to ensure middle managers take a strategic role in leading their subjects.

School improvement is promoted through the work of development teams; these cross phase teams, led by senior teachers, meet regularly to review, inform and improve practice. Their priorities are clearly focussed on identified needs, such as improving literacy skills and raising achievement in science. Through monitoring of planning, observation of teaching and planning for improvement, a culture of professional development is embedded at all levels. This is informed by teachers' assessment of barriers to pupils' progress and provides an immediate forum to address issues as they arise. The work of the development teams is helping to ensure that a clear vision, shared ethos and a consistent approach exists. These are having a positive impact on pupils' academic performance.

Senior leaders have now developed and embedded much more robust systems for tracking pupils' progress and identifying underachieving groups. The detailed analysis for all year groups clearly identifies pupils who may need additional support, which is then provided and evaluated. However, it doesn't identify pupils who would benefit from extra challenge.

Senior leaders have actively promoted the use of good questioning to challenge all pupils, particularly the more able. Teachers use questioning effectively to develop pupils' thinking skills. Pupils give thoughtful and articulate responses but they are not always encouraged to build on each others answers.

Teachers' planning is detailed and identifies outcomes for different groups of learners. In the lesson observed, planning for pupils with learning difficulties demonstrated high expectation and they made progress because of good quality support provided by either teaching assistants or teachers. They do not do the work for them but through questioning support pupils' learning. Senior leaders are seeking to ensure that all support provided by additional adults is as good as the best in school.

Teachers' marking helps pupils to see how to improve their work; pupils stress how their teachers make sure they take their comments into account. Additionally, detailed analysis is undertaken of tests which identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses, which are then addressed through subsequent teaching. A new system which uses this analysis to sets curricular targets for pupils is raising pupils' and teachers' expectation. These are differentiated for groups of pupils and regularly

reviewed. Pupils fully understand the purpose of the targets and can eloquently explain how this is helping them to improve. One pupil said 'teachers challenge us', another added, 'we like the challenge'. They know teachers will support them to improve.

Involvement of parents through events such as the Gifted and Talented evening in literacy and numeracy is enabling them to be better informed about how to support their children. The local authority has provided good support in enabling the school to make good progress since the previous inspection. Strong governance has provided very good support to the deputy head in developing the provision for pupils with learning difficulties.

Support for teachers has developed their skills in challenging and extending able learners and those with learning difficulties. A strategic approach, focussed on clear priorities and systems to review practice has meant that the progress pupils' make has improved significantly. The impact of this can be seen in improved outcomes in external tests but also in the progress pupils make in lessons.

Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of where further improvement is needed and are highly ambitious for their school and, more importantly, for their pupils.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

Asyia Kazmi
Her Majesty's Inspector