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30 January 2008

Mrs Maria Tarn
Walbottle Village Primary School
The Green
Walbottle Village
Newcastle upon Tyne
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Dear Mrs Tarn

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 29 January 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I also appreciated the time given by the chair of governors to meet with me and talk about the improvements made since the inspection in September 2006. Please, also, extend my thanks to the pupils who met with me over lunch to talk about life at school.

Since the previous inspection, there has been significant disruption to the staffing, which has necessitated the school using a number of supply teachers on a regular basis. The deputy headteacher, who is also the Year 5/6 class teacher, was on maternity leave at the time of the previous inspection, and only returned to work at the beginning of 2007. The current Year 1/2 teacher is in her first year of teaching and covering the maternity leave of the permanent full-time member of staff. The Year 3/4 class teacher has been on long-term sick leave since April 2007. Long-term cover for this class has been problematic, and there have been three supply teachers since April 2007.

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

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

- improve the quality of teaching for those pupils who are making limited progress, especially in writing and mathematics
- provide parents with information about their children's learning and clarify what the expectations are for homework.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

The 2007 test results showed that standards at Key Stage 1 were down on the previous year's performance in the three core areas of reading, writing and mathematics. These results were the first since 2004 where the school has performed below the national averages, either in the individual areas or collectively. At Key Stage 2, the 2007 performance dipped significantly in English, mathematics and science compared with 2006, and individually and collectively the standards in these subjects were exceptionally low. The pupils' attainment on entry to the school varies from year to year, but has generally been in line with the levels of skills, knowledge and personal attributes expected for children starting school at five years of age. Based on the latest national test results, pupils' progress is broadly satisfactory in English and mathematics, and inadequate in science. However, there is sufficient evidence to show that since September 2007, a combination of targeted teacher support and effective monitoring of ongoing performance is helping the majority of pupils to make at least satisfactory progress in their learning at both key stages.

The school is aware of existing weaknesses in both teaching and learning, and has put together a range of suitable strategies to tackle underperformance in both these areas. Monitoring of teaching is satisfactory, and includes regular observations by both the headteacher and her deputy. The school analyses pupils' performance using national and optional end of year tests for all year groups. This range of information is helping the school to accurately assess where additional teacher support is needed, or where pupils' performance is lower than could reasonably be expected for their age. This means that the school is alert to those pupils whose progress in writing and mathematics is too slow because of ineffective teaching.

The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, but there is a range from inadequate to good. The significant disruption to the teaching staff since the previous inspection has had an effect on the continuity and progression of both teaching and pupils' learning, especially in Years 3 and 4. The overall quality of teaching at Key Stage 1 is satisfactory, with some good features. Lesson planning is thorough. Relationships are good. The well organised range of activities, combined with the clear manner and tone from the teacher, enables the pupils to be attentive and well focused on the different learning activities. As a result, the pupils are making satisfactory progress in their learning. At Key Stage 2, teaching is most effective when good classroom management and well organised and differentiated activities ensure that all pupils make progress in their learning. Teaching of this quality is seen in Years 5 and 6. Where it is less effective, as seen in Years 3 and 4, the activities are insufficiently challenging for the ability range and age of pupils, and the management of those pupils with particularly challenging behaviour is less effective than it should be. Continued monitoring and support in these classes is needed to ensure that pupils' achieve in line with their capabilities.

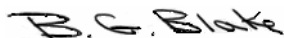
The pupils are generally very positive about attending the school. Those who met with the inspector indicated that they enjoyed lunch and playtimes when they could

mix with their friends from other classes. Pupils also enjoy the after-school clubs and other out-of-lesson activities that provide them with lots of opportunities to stay active and learn new skills. The pupils also expressed their enjoyment of some subjects where they feel they are doing well. The pupils were also unequivocal in their views about some of the things they should like to see improve in the school, including more fiction books in the school library, better use of games equipment at breaks, and better behaviour from the small minority who make it difficult for supply teachers working in the school.

The school is aware that a minority of parents have concerns about the disruption to teaching. It has been working more systematically to improve the quality of its communication, including more regular opportunities to meet with parents to discuss pupils' work. More still needs to be done to reassure these parents that any disruptions to teaching are minimised and that the pupils' future progress will not be affected.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "B.G. Blake". The letters are slightly slanted and connected in a cursive-like style.

Brian Blake
Her Majesty's Inspector