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31 October 2007

The Headteacher  
Jeffries Primary and Nursery School  
Vernon Road  
Kirkby in Ashfield  
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NG17 8EE

Dear Miss Bent,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 30 October 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I would be grateful if you would pass on my thanks to the chair of governors and to the pupils in the school who gave me a warm and friendly welcome wherever I went.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Since the school was inspected in October 2006 there have been some changes that have affected the school's progress. During the 2006-07 academic year the school continued to face instability in its teaching arrangements. This instability affected all of the pupils in what was Year 5 and many of those that were in Year 6. In addition, the headteacher left the school for another post and you were appointed as the new headteacher from April 2007. A new deputy headteacher was appointed during the Summer term, taking up his position in September 2007. Besides these there have been other changes to the composition of the Senior Leadership Team and, taken together with the instability in staffing referred to, it is clear that the school has been through a period of considerable transition.

As a result of the inspection on 10-11 October 2006, the school was asked to address a number of areas for improvement:

- As a matter of urgency, to ensure that the school complied fully with statutory requirements for the safeguarding of pupils
- To increase the amount of good or better teaching
- To improve assessment by ensuring that challenging targets are set for all pupils, their progress is carefully tracked and marking clearly outlines what pupils need to do to improve

- To ensure that the senior management team and subject leaders rigorously monitor the quality of teaching and analyse data with the aim of promoting good standards and achievement.

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

The school does now comply with the statutory requirements for the safeguarding of pupils. A single, central record is in place and all teachers and classroom assistants who require checking and clearance have had this process completed. Procedures with regard to volunteers and other staff are secure. Appropriate training has been undertaken by the headteacher on safe recruitment and there is a designated governor with responsibility for safeguarding who is due to undertake training shortly. Progress on this issue is satisfactory.

The school has made satisfactory progress towards increasing the amount of good or better teaching and towards monitoring its quality. This inspection was not able to explore fully whether the quality of teaching has improved. However, lesson observations have been taking place since the last inspection, undertaken by members of the Senior Leadership Team, and teachers are positive about how the process can contribute towards improving their practice. Other quality assurance processes are being developed to monitor the quality of teaching and pupil achievement such as work scrutinies and checks on marking. At present there is no overarching policy framework or calendar for quality assurance processes and the various elements of it operate in isolation from each other. The school's own evaluation of teaching suggests that there is insufficient awareness of how teaching needs to improve. For example, the use of information technology (IT) within the classroom to improve the pace of learning and to engage pupils is very limited at present.

There has been a candid recognition by the school's new leadership team working with the local authority, that the programmes of support which have been in place for the last three years, designed to improve the progress of pupils, have been ineffective. A more radical approach is being adopted through a new theme-based approach to the curriculum. With extra funding and advice from the local authority this has been implemented across the school from September 2007 and is designed to improve the motivation of pupils, particularly that of boys. Teachers have been fully involved in the planning and appreciate the greater freedom and flexibility it gives them. There is some evidence that this curriculum is being effective in providing opportunities for active learning and is engaging pupils in their learning more fully. At present there is uncertainty how the themed approach will be integrated with a continuing focus on standards of achievement. A clear process by which the effectiveness of the new curriculum will be evaluated is yet to be developed.

Satisfactory progress has been made with regard to assessment. Pupils are very aware of the targets that they have for their learning. Skill based targets are prominently displayed in classrooms and pupils understand their purpose. Many pupils find these targets challenging but some, particularly boys, are not motivated

by them. Pupils generally are positive about how the marking of their work, which is consistent across the school, gives them clear information on what they need to do to improve. Targets for behaviour and effort are also used. Pupils clearly enjoy the self assessment activities that take place. The new curriculum is being used to develop the more effective use of lesson objectives and success criteria. Teachers make formal assessments of pupils' progress each half term and this process is followed by staff meetings at which teachers share concerns and information about individual children. Pupil progress is tracked effectively on newly-designed grids that make clear what each pupil's starting point has been, what their progress is, and what it should be. There is a strong sense of a shared commitment to pupil progress among the staff.

Progress in developing these practices within the school has been satisfactory. However, many of these developments are quite new. At the present time the curriculum, the greater focus on quality assurance and the more rigorous tracking of progress, have not been in place long enough to have had an impact on pupil achievement. This is clear from the recent test results.

Results from the 2007 tests indicate that by the end of Year 2 pupils have made at least satisfactory progress and their levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly in line with national averages. However, by the end of Year 6 the pupils have fallen behind. Their levels of attainment in mathematics and science are well below average and in English it is exceptionally low. The progress that they have made between Years 2 and 6 is very poor.

In summary, it is clear that the school has not yet made sufficient progress in raising pupil achievement. However, the more stable situation at the school in terms of its leadership and its teaching, the steps that are now being taken, and the continuing support from the local authority, give good grounds for optimism with regard to its future development.

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

Yours sincerely

Bob Roberts  
Her Majesty's Inspector