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Mrs J Dunnet
The Headteacher
Clarendon Road Community Primary School
Clarendon Road
Eccles
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Dear Mrs Dunnet

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 25 June 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the staff and pupils for their help, particularly those pupils who came to talk to me and who represented the school so well.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

As a result of the inspection on 14 and 15 March 2007, the school was asked to:

- raise standards and achievement in mathematics across the school
- raise achievement of the more able pupils
- improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in evaluating and improving the school's performance.

In addition, the report judged that teachers' marking of pupils' work was too variable in quality and that the presentation of work was not given sufficient emphasis.

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

Since the last inspection Clarendon Road has been deemed a Fully Extended School for the range of provision and advice it offers to the community. It has gained the Activemark award for sport. Pupil numbers have decreased in line with local patterns but are now stable. Attendance has continued to improve and there have been no exclusions.

Standards have risen in both key stages. End of Key Stage 1 assessments are carefully moderated so that the school now has a more accurate picture of pupils' standards. In the 2007 assessments the biggest improvement was in pupils' standards in mathematics, although they still tended to do better in reading and writing. Girls' achievement was better than that of the boys. Significantly, the more able pupils reached the levels expected of them in all three areas. Results in the end of Key Stage 2 national tests showed a marked improvement in 2007. This was because pupils made much better progress in both mathematics and science than they had done previously. Girls did particularly well. The more able pupils reached their potential in science and mathematics, but some underachieved in English. Results in English fell because of pupils' weaker writing skills. The school has responded quickly to this, making regular formal writing a priority for both lessons and marking. Achievement in mathematics and for higher attaining pupils in all core subjects is predicted to be at least satisfactory this year.

The school has made significant strides towards raising standards and achievement in mathematics, helped by the availability of new resources. The headteacher has taken over the coordination of the subject across the school. This has stimulated debate about how best to teach it and how to change the curriculum so that skills are methodically developed. Pupils talk of the enjoyment they get from mathematics, especially practical problem solving, though some higher attaining pupils still find occasions when the work is too easy. During a tour of mathematics lessons, pupils' engagement and interest was evident.

Teachers use detailed lesson plans to vary the levels of difficulty and challenge for pupils. Increasingly, higher attaining pupils receive work that challenges them to achieve as well as they can. Some planning shows good analysis of what pupils have learnt so that future lessons can take their progress into account, but this does not happen consistently across the school. Marking has improved and pupils feel it is more helpful. Extended writing tasks in literacy are having a significant impact. Work sampled during the visit showed better quality marking of this, with an effective balance between praise and suggestions for improvement. Most teachers are alert to the need to target areas for possible improvement even when work is of above average quality. However, other marking is still too variable in detail and quality. Vague ticking and praise, and targets for improvement that are neither precise nor personal to the pupil remain too frequent. The school has responded to this, albeit slowly, with a clear and well thought-out marking policy which all staff have agreed to use from September 2008. Handwriting practice and giving more emphasis to formal extended writing are helping improve standards of presentation. Neatness remains variable in general work, partly because of the many worksheets and pieces of paper used, to which pupils attach less importance.

The school is better at evaluating its work because information is more detailed and readily available. Any underperformance is clearly identified. The school improvement plan draws on such findings and makes issues, priorities and timescales clear. An extended leadership team is helping to establish greater cohesion and teamwork across the school. The formation of 'curriculum teams' to look at progression in a subject has made teachers more aware of how each other works. Leaders at all levels understand their part in analysing performance and stimulating improvement. Summary documents, such as data on pupils' progress and the

findings of work scrutiny and lesson observations, are cross-referenced to check what is working well and where improvements are needed. However, lesson observation notes are still not evaluative enough to give clear pointers to teachers about how to help pupils learn better. Some initiatives have not been implemented quickly enough. For instance teachers' understanding and use of target setting still varies too much. Managers are not clear enough about the format and frequency of targets, nor rigorous in checking that teachers are following this up. Assessment and target setting in subjects beyond English, mathematics and science remain too limited.

The local authority has provided good support to the school. This has been valuable in monitoring and steering improvements in mathematics and in helping the school to use a more rigorous system for checking the quality of marking. School improvement planning, too, has become clearer and focused because of the advice given.

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

Yours sincerely

Jon Lövgreen
Additional Inspector