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01 October 2008

Mrs Adele Stringer  
Headteacher  
Mount Pleasant Junior, Infant and Nursery School  
Lockwood Road  
Huddersfield  
West Yorkshire  
HD1 3QS

Dear Mrs Stringer

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 30 September 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information you provided before and during my visit. I also welcomed the opportunity to talk with other members of staff, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA) and to speak informally with pupils. Please pass on my thanks to all those involved.

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 September 2007, the school was asked to:

- Raise standards at the end of Year 6 to ensure that achievement for all groups of pupils is at least good.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better through the rigorous monitoring of pupils' learning and the effective use of assessment information.
- Improve the provision for children in the Reception.
- Provide pupils with more opportunities to take responsibility for learning.

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 pupils' achievement.

Since the last inspection the headteacher and deputy headteacher have retired. The newly appointed headteacher has been working with the school since May 2008 and took up the permanent role in September 2008. The acting deputy headteacher has been in post since February of this year. In addition, there have been a number of further staffing changes and new appointments made to the school from September

2008. Although procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place, the headteacher is currently checking that systems are robust following the recent staff turnover.

Unvalidated results of national tests taken in 2008 by pupils at the end of Years 2 and 6 show that standards are rising although they remain well below the national average. The number of pupils attaining expected levels in both English and mathematics rose significantly as a result of intensive strategies to raise achievement. However, pupils' performance varies between subjects. In Year 6, standards rose significantly in reading and are now broadly in line with the national average; floor targets were exceeded in writing. Standards in mathematics also rose but, compared with other subjects, the improvement was not as marked.

A comprehensive system to track pupils' assessment has been established, which provides a reliable overview of progress made by different groups of pupils and a baseline from which to secure further improvement. This information has highlighted significant variations in progress between different classes. In the past, emphasis has been placed on accelerating pupils' progress in Years 2 and 6 in order to meet targets and to close gaps in their previous learning. The headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have identified the need to ensure greater consistency in progress across all years and classes to enable pupils to achieve their full potential. They have worked hard to raise the expectations of staff and pupils through setting more challenging targets and establishing a mechanism by which teachers can regularly check pupils' progress towards those targets.

Many strategies have been used in a bid to raise the achievement of different groups of pupils. Some have had a beneficial impact, for instance in improving standards in reading and in the development of phonics. However, teachers have, until recently, relied too heavily on using support staff to work with small groups on particular aspects of learning. In some instances, pupils have been withdrawn too frequently from lessons. Consequently, they have not benefited from whole-class teaching to achieve as well as they should. Evaluation of the impact of targeted strategies has helped the school to identify those which work well and to begin to develop a more strategic approach to supporting pupils with additional learning needs.

The quality of teaching is improving and has been strengthened further by a number of recent appointments. Teachers generally respond positively to feedback from lesson observations and have benefited from training, for example in setting learning objectives and developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. Observations during the inspection confirmed the school's views of teaching quality. In the best lessons, the teacher's enthusiastic approach promotes pupils' enjoyment and their active participation in a variety of well structured activities. Tasks promote pupils' speaking and listening skills well and good questioning helps them to extend and reflect upon their learning. Where lessons are otherwise satisfactory, teachers do not use assessment information precisely enough to tailor activities to the needs of all pupils. Lessons lack pace and opportunities are missed to check pupils' learning or to add additional challenges for them to consider. In the least effective lessons, pupils are unclear about what they are learning and drift off task.

Teachers are able to call upon a large team of staff to support pupils' learning. However, additional staff are not all involved in lesson planning and their contribution to raising pupils' achievement is sometimes unclear. While many teachers are beginning to develop a greater variety of activities to engage pupils in their learning, scrutiny of pupils' work reveals an over-reliance on worksheets in some subjects, notably mathematics. The quality of marking is variable. There are examples of good practice where pupils' achievements are noted and the next steps for learning are clearly identified. However, this is not consistent across the school and the opportunities for pupils to be involved in their own assessment are too few.

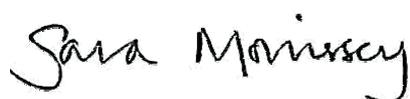
Pupils generally respond enthusiastically to opportunities to take an active part in their learning. They behave well and have responded positively to the recently revised and simplified behaviour policy. Opportunities are being built into the curriculum to enable pupils to take greater responsibility for their learning through enrichment activities and the development of social and personal skills.

While provision in the Reception class is satisfactory overall, it is not used as effectively as it might be to inspire children in their learning within a vibrant and exciting environment. Plans to improve the quality of the outdoor learning area have been delayed but the existing provision is not used to best effect to enthuse and engage children in a range of activities that reflect all areas of learning. Nonetheless, accurate assessments of children's learning show the positive impact of actions taken to improve children's skills in linking sounds and letters. The school has identified the need to develop arrangements to ensure a smooth transition for children between the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stage 1 that supports their learning needs appropriately.

The headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have quickly gained a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have established a greater awareness among staff of the next steps required to raise standards further. However, the headteacher has recognised the need to clarify the roles of other leaders to ensure that prioritised actions taken are consistently and coherently applied to secure improvement. Governors are committed but do not all possess the necessary skills and knowledge of the school to provide appropriate support and challenge. Support from the local authority has been very effective in providing additional capacity to school leaders during a period of change and in prioritising the assistance required to tackle areas for improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara Maracey".

Her Majesty's Inspector