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Mr J Shaw
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Dear Mr Shaw

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 26 February 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to the chair of governors, the school improvement partner, staff and groups of pupils who gave of their time to meet with me. Their strong commitment to the school and their pride in the improvements which you have made together was evident in all the discussions I had.

As a result of the inspection on 11–12 December 2007, the school was asked to address three areas for improvement: to raise standards in writing and mathematics, particularly at Key Stage 1; to improve academic guidance so that all pupils know what they have to do in order to improve; and to increase the level of challenge for lower achieving pupils, particularly in Key Stage 1.

Since the last inspection, two teachers have moved year groups to make best use of their skills and expertise and one of the Reception class teachers is covering a maternity leave in the Nursery, with a supply teacher working alongside the other full-time Reception teacher. Staffing has remained stable and this has helped the school to consolidate effective and consistent practice.

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.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that are very low, particularly in relation to language and social skills. They make good progress in their learning but are still working below national expectations when they start Key Stage 1. The most recent Key Stage 1 national assessments in 2008 indicate that standards have improved considerably in reading, writing and



mathematics. There has been a sustained upward trend over the last four years, with more pupils reaching the levels expected of children their age. Although the percentage of pupils reaching these levels is below the national average, the majority are making good progress from their very low starting points. Attainment at the higher levels in writing remains low and this is a continuing priority for improvement. Key Stage 2 provisional 2008 national test results show that the improvements in mathematics and science have been sustained at the expected Level 4 and improved on at the higher Level 5. In science, 96% of pupils attained Level 4 and above, which represents good achievement. English results dipped at Level 4, due to mobility factors within the cohort, but increased at Level 5.

Pupils' work and the school's pupil progress tracking show that the majority of pupils are now making at least satisfactory and often good progress in lessons. Standards in writing and mathematics are being raised across the whole school because teaching and assessment have improved and pupils are building on their knowledge and skills more consistently.

The small amount of teaching sampled during the inspection confirmed the school's own evaluation that the quality of teaching and learning has improved over the last two years. The teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. Where teaching was outstanding, pupils were given challenging problems to solve using knowledge and skills previously well taught. This was observed in a Year 6 class where pupils used coordinates to produce a shape and its reflected image in four quadrants. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed the challenge and took great pride in their work. Where teaching was satisfactory, it was because a small number of pupils were not fully engaged in the tasks set or because the plenary was too rushed meaning that pupils were not able to take stock of and evaluate their learning.

An important factor in the success of all lessons is the constructive and supportive relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils enjoy their lessons and grow in confidence under the encouraging direction of teachers and teaching assistants. Their behaviour during the inspection was consistently good and their pride in their achievements and their school was very evident. The emphasis on linking sounds and letters, speaking and listening, and the implementation of the 'Big Write' initiative are also proving effective in enhancing pupils' vocabulary and literacy skills across the whole school. Activities within whole class teaching are generally well differentiated to provide appropriate challenge for the different ability groups. Teaching assistants and the special needs coordinator are providing good support for lower achieving pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has made good progress in increasing the level of challenge for lower achieving pupils.

The good assessment and tracking procedures identified in the last inspection have been further embedded and information is used effectively to set challenging academic targets for pupils and performance targets for staff. Whole school, year, group and individual pupil targets are in place. Where there is evidence of underachievement, the school acts quickly to support pupils through a range of

effective programmes and provide professional development for staff. The emphasis on assessment for learning and marking has improved the academic guidance which pupils receive. There is a consistent approach to target-setting and marking across the whole school. Pupils understand their academic targets and are able to act on the constructive comments made on their written work. They are also helped to know how to improve their work through regular conferencing and verbal feedback.

Key factors underpinning this good progress are the clear vision and high-quality leadership provided by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and the full commitment of staff and governors to build on the improvements which have brought the school out of special measures. Together, they have transformed the ethos of the school: there is a very positive culture for learning and ambition to improve. Secure systems are in place to ensure consistency in provision and there is a strong drive and energy to develop it further. Staff are appreciative of the professional development opportunities they have been afforded. They are playing a full part in leading developments in key areas such as provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, subject leadership, inclusion and creativity. Governors are also effectively engaged in challenging and supporting school leaders. They are well informed and have high aspirations for the pupils and the school as a whole. Links with parents have been strengthened further. They are well informed about the progress their children are making and show good support for the school.

The local authority has provided good support to build the school's capacity and develop the skills of staff.

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

Yours sincerely

Jean Kendall
Her Majesty's Inspector