

31 March 2009

Ms Liz Hayward
Headteacher
Kingsgate Primary School
Kingsgate Road
London
NW6 4LB

Dear Ms Hayward

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 25 March 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please convey my thanks to the pupils, senior staff, middle managers, teaching assistants, chair of governors and the School Improvement Partner/link adviser, who gave their time to meet with me and talk about the school's work.

Following the last inspection, the headteacher took swift action to clarify the vision for raising standards. This involved increasing accountability through developing rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision, improving the learning environment and restructuring the staff. This was followed by a high staff turnover, when some teachers moved to other posts or action was taken to improve teaching and learning. Five newly appointed teachers, including four newly qualified staff, joined the school at the start of September 2008. Staffing is now stable and there is a good mix of new and experienced teachers and support staff. High mobility remains an issue but there was a slight improvement in 2008, as fewer pupils left or joined the school other than at the usual times.

As a result of the inspection on 3 October 2007, the school was asked to:

- improve the teaching of reading to pupils in Key Stage 1
- ensure that there is consistently good teaching throughout the school
- improve the provision for more able pupils to ensure they make good progress
- ensure that the new arrangements for middle leaders are effective.

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.

Good intervention programmes have been introduced to improve the quality of the teaching of reading to pupils in Key Stage 1. Early intervention is good and begins in the Reception classes, where there is a clear focus on developing pre-reading skills. Other reading interventions include guided reading, booster classes and specific writing programmes. These are fully embedded in the drive to improve literacy in all key stages, and more specifically in Key Stage 1, so that pupils can master basic literacy skills before making the transition to Key Stage 2. The strong emphasis on phonic skills and guided reading are the main drivers to improving reading in Years 1 and 2. The programme of work is very well planned and is monitored regularly and efficiently. All staff, including teaching assistants, have undertaken training and are well versed in using the programmes effectively to improve pupils' reading.

The assessment information on pupils' reading records show that most are currently exceeding their reading targets. Although the 2008 unvalidated Key Stage 1 results in reading were well below average, they were the best in the last four years and represent a significant improvement. The reliable tracking data on reading are used robustly to identify those at risk of not meeting their target so that remedial action can be taken quickly. Developmental work with parents and community groups, including adult literacy classes and curricular workshops mean that parents are supportive of the interventions and are working with the school to develop good reading habits in their children. For example, the school has seen an increase in pupils' personal libraries and in the number of books borrowed from the library.

Good systems have been introduced to improve the quality of teaching and learning in all year groups and, as a result, the teaching profile that has been validated by the local authority shows an increasingly high proportion of good or better teaching. This is linked to the increased monitoring as well as the support and advice from external consultants. The senior staff use a rigorous system to monitor teaching and provide feedback during the termly performance development meetings which includes reviewing the progress of each pupil. Records show that the meetings are used very well to develop a corporate approach to focusing on the main areas for improving teaching and learning. Teachers are increasingly incorporating the features of good teaching in their lessons because of the emphasis on team work when planning, training and sharing good practice. There has also been an extensive focus on teachers monitoring each other's work.

Since the last inspection, the school has developed good provision for pupils identified as gifted and talented. Good systems are in place to identify and support these pupils. For example, steps have been taken to ensure that the curriculum reflects their needs and include programmes of work such as Maths Challenge and extended reading in English. Additionally, all pupils are now offered Philosophy for Children (P4C). The benefits of this weekly course are making a significant contribution to developing the thinking and communication skills of some of the more able pupils. The school now has a register, as well as a policy, for identifying and nurturing the skills of the most able pupils. Provision for the most able pupils also involves parents working closely with teachers to provide extra support. Focused and good support systems led to more able pupils reaching the higher

levels in the 2008 national tests in English and mathematics. Further work and training are planned to develop the provision for this group of pupils.

Rapid progress has been made in developing the leadership and management skills of both the core subject leaders in English, mathematics and information and communication technology and the Early Years and Foundation Stage. Each leader has clear responsibility for a phase and acquit themselves well in the role as a result of the developmental training undertaken. Middle leaders have successfully completed the national course 'Leading from the Middle'. They have also benefited from working alongside external consultants, and participating in a needs analysis exercise. Consequently, they are more reflective of their practice and feel well equipped to carry out their duties. Their good grasp of the headteacher's vision has supported the school in the rapid improvement made and is also contributing to their developing a good range of leadership skills across the school as they spread the benefits of their training widely. Systems for evaluation are emerging and the school recognises that this is the next step in developing middle leaders' work.

The local authority is providing effective and extensive support which has boosted the teachers' confidence in improving the quality of provision and knowing the next steps they need to take. Governors work closely with the school on all fronts and are very much involved in the process of the school moving forward.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Carmen Rodney
Her Majesty's Inspector