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Mrs M Blewer
The Headteacher
Brookfield Junior School
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Dear Mrs Blewer

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

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 pass on my thanks to the staff, pupils and chair of governors for their contributions during the day.

Since the last inspection, some staff have left and others have joined the school. Some existing staff have changed the year groups they teach. The Year 4 class has had several temporary teachers covering the long-term absence of a member of staff. Two newly qualified teachers were appointed in January to continue to cover for this absence in Year 4 and another in Year 5 prior to the number of classes reducing from nine to eight. The school tried unsuccessfully to appoint a deputy headteacher for the start of the spring term and again for the summer term. The school is now seeking to appoint from the start of September 2009. Two new governors have been appointed since the last inspection and a seconded governor from another school has been supporting the governing body since September 2009.

As a result of the inspection on 8 and 9 July 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards in English and mathematics through more effective teaching
- enable pupils to be actively involved in assessing their own achievements and develop a greater degree of independence in their lessons
- ensure that assessment information is used effectively to match tasks and activities to pupils' needs.

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.



In a drive to raise pupils' attainment in English and mathematics, the school has focused effectively in making the quality of teaching more secure. There is still a link between how effectively pupils are taught in each class and the progress they make, but typically teaching is now more flexible in the way pupils have more choice in how they approach or complete activities. The school has made satisfactory progress in improving lesson planning so pupils can be more independent in their learning. Pupils reported, with some enthusiasm, their greater choice of ways of recording their work, the type of experiments to do in science or the size of paper they can use in art. However, they also recognise that some choices are less meaningful than others and feel there could still be more open-ended activities provided.

Improvements in pupils' attainment have also been aided by initiatives such as changing the setting arrangements in English and mathematics in Years 3 to 5 so that staff can keep a closer check on the progress of pupils in their own class. The school is beginning to have a clearer picture of how individual pupils and the school as a whole are performing and can now identify how specific groups of pupils are doing. It now makes satisfactory (and improving) use of this information to analyse what pupils know, understand and can do before modifying plans for teaching activities and helping pupils set their targets for improvement. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are rising at the end of Year 6 and are set to match those levels achieved in national tests in the previous year. With standards now being closer to those expected, this represents satisfactory progress.

The school's records show that rates of progress vary from class to class. Pupils make the expected progress in Years 3 and 6. It is more variable in Years 4 and 5 where a number of staff changes have hampered pupils making more rapid and sustained progress. A clearer focus when monitoring teaching has given staff better guidance about how to tailor activities more accurately to pupils' developing needs and abilities. In lessons, activities planned take into account pupils' different abilities more routinely. Some lessons, however, still rely on the pupils working on the same task rather than some having different starting points or tasks, but this is reducing. Staff are also more aware and accurate in their judgements of standards so they can assess pupils' achievement and progress to help modify lesson planning.

A satisfactory range of initiatives, including advanced skills teachers aiding class teachers with planning and closer monitoring of teaching, are having positive impacts on pupils' learning. There are good features of teaching, for example the use of success criteria so pupils know what is expected of them and are better able to judge if they are making progress. The use of a traffic light system in which pupils assess their progress is also raising their awareness of how well they are learning, although some pupils do not do this as accurately as others.

Senior staff have a secure understanding of strengths and weaknesses and observation and evaluations are satisfactorily documented. The delayed appointment of a deputy headteacher is causing some uncertainty, although the school has acted quickly to make sure staffing is as stable as possible in the meantime. Subject leaders and governors are monitoring more effectively how the curriculum is

affecting pupils' learning, particularly in giving them more independence and self-assessment. Aided by additional training and external support from advisors, senior leaders are setting a realistic pace to the improvements needed to improve pupils' achievements further. The school continues to address matters of safeguarding effectively. The requirement to maintain a single central record of the checks made on staff, governors and volunteers working with pupils is fully met. This is consistent with the satisfactory care and good pastoral support reported in the last inspection which continue to support pupils' good personal development.

The support that the local authority gives the school is good. It ranges from subject specialist advisers modelling subject planning and leading staff training to working with the headteacher in analysing the school's performance and deciding how improvements will be made. There is evidence that the statement of action which directs local authority support is having a positive impact on the quality of education provided. This effectively translates theory into practice through a variety of plans which provide sufficient support for school development and lay the foundation for its satisfactory capacity to improve.

I wish you well for the future and 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

Kevin Hodge
Additional Inspector