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10 June 2009

Miss J Pitchford
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Pitchford

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 9 June 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please extend my thanks to parents, governors, lunch-time supervisors, the School Improvement Partner, staff and pupils for their helpful contributions to the inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 20 and 21 May 2008, the school was asked to:

- Improve the attitudes and behaviour of a small minority of pupils and raise their expectations of what they can achieve.
- Improve the partnership with parents to include all parents.
- Establish and improve the effectiveness of governance.
- Improve the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Review and improve the arrangements for lunchtime supervision.
- Further raise the standards of the more able pupils.

Since that inspection the school has made changes to classroom organisation so that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and those in Year 1 are taught in discrete groups. The senior leadership team has been strengthened with the inclusion of two senior post-holders who have been leading developments in mathematics, inclusion, curriculum and assessment.

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 progress has been made in improving the attitudes and behaviour of the small minority of pupils who were demonstrating poor behaviour.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage from a range of pre-school settings. Their knowledge and skills are generally in line or above those expected of children



their age, although their language and communication skills have been lower in the last two years. Children are making satisfactory progress in the Reception Year and most are working above national expectations in all areas of learning except writing, when they start Key Stage 1. The school has halted the downward trend in standards at Key Stage 1. In 2008 pupils attained standards that were broadly in line with the national average. However, a lower proportion achieved at the higher levels in reading and writing than was the case nationally. The school has put strategies in place to raise the attainment of the more able pupils and these are beginning to have a positive impact. The latest assessments indicate that a higher proportion of pupils are achieving at Level 2A and above in reading and mathematics. Although attainment in writing has improved, pupils' progress is slower and there are still too few pupils reaching these higher levels. The school recognises there are further improvements to be made in this area.

Key Stage 2 results have improved significantly since the last inspection and the school has successfully raised standards for the more able pupils in mathematics and science. In the 2008 national tests the school exceeded national averages and its own challenging targets in both subjects, particularly at the higher levels. Standards also improved in English although a lower proportion achieved the higher Level 5. Raising standards in English and maintaining the gains made in mathematics and science remain priorities for the school. The 2009 teacher assessments and work observed during the inspection indicate that improvements have been sustained for the current Year 6 class.

Pupils are making better progress because the determined drive of the headteacher and concerted efforts of all staff have brought about improvements to teaching, particularly in mathematics. The mathematics subject leader has organised good quality professional development tailored to the needs of all staff and linked to performance management objectives. Leaders have a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses based on the school's own and external monitoring and its good systems for tracking pupils' progress. Weaker teaching is now most evident in writing. There are appropriate plans in place to support those teachers whose practice is not consistently good. Where teaching is most effective, for example in Year 6, pupils are able to use their prior knowledge and apply their skills to a range of interesting work. The more able pupils are challenged to think through complex problems and enabled to work creatively and with a high degree of independence. Where weaker teaching was observed, the tasks did not fully capture all pupils' interest and plenary sessions were not sufficiently focused on learning outcomes and development of skills. Teaching assistants make a good contribution, for example, in supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are underachieving.

Pupils behaved well and displayed positive attitudes in all the lessons observed during the inspection. Although a few pupils became restless when they were not fully engaged in the tasks, they quickly responded to the teacher's guidance. Pupils take pride in their achievements: they were keen to show their work and demonstrate their skills. Increasingly challenging targets are being set for pupils of

all ability and these, together with teachers' marking and feedback, are raising pupils' expectations of what they can achieve. Pupils' behaviour was equally good over lunchtime. The school has taken effective steps to improve lunchtime supervision and pupils say that they thoroughly enjoy playtimes and feel safe. Behaviour policy and playtime procedures have been revised with all staff and pupils playing a part. Leaders have improved the visibility of the school's extensive grounds and midday assistants supervise in zoned areas so that all parts of the grounds can be clearly overseen. Year 6 pupils make an excellent contribution to the improved arrangements, providing structured games and activities for younger pupils.

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved and is satisfactory. The learning environment has been developed so that children have continuous access to the outdoor area and resources are readily accessible both indoors and outside. There is a good balance between child-initiated and adult-directed activity. Children thoroughly enjoy the increased opportunities to learn through purposeful and imaginative play and adults are more effectively deployed to support their language and skills development. School leaders and Early Years Foundation Stage staff are working effectively together to bring about further necessary improvements. With support from the local authority, they are currently focusing on developing children's reading and writing skills.

Improvements to Early Years Foundation Stage provision have been further enhanced through greater parental involvement. The drive to improve the partnership with parents has extended across the school with the provision of workshops, regular information sharing and development of the school website. A number of parents spoken to during the inspection said that teachers are approachable and caring and that their children are always happy to come to school. They feel better informed and more able to contribute to decision making. They expressed a high level of confidence in the leadership team and were satisfied with the quality of education provided.

The headteacher's clear vision is based on a good understanding of strengths and areas requiring development. It is shared by all staff and governors who are fully committed to bringing about improvement. She is being well supported by the strengthened leadership team and governing body. Subject leaders are also playing a greater part in monitoring provision and planning. Changes which had just been made to the governing body at the time of the last inspection have been embedded and governors' roles and responsibilities more clearly defined. Governors are well informed and play a full part in the school's self-review and strategic planning. They are now effectively supporting and challenging school leaders through the revised committee structures.

The school has engaged effectively with the local authority, which has provided good support through focused reviews, monitoring visits and professional development. Where there has been targeted action, there is demonstrable impact, for example, in raising pupils' achievement in mathematics, improving provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and improving the effectiveness of governance. With the systems



that have been put in place and based on this track record, the school is well placed to further raise standards and improve the quality of provision.

Yours sincerely

Jean Kendall
Her Majesty's Inspector