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Mr J Griffiths
The Headteacher
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Dear Mr Griffiths

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 thank the pupils, staff, and the chair of the governing body who gave their time for our discussions.

Since the last inspection, the governors and staff have been working towards a planned merger with another primary school that would have meant closing the Marlborough School site in 2011 or 2012. Recently, however, the local authority has informed the school that this amalgamation is unlikely to take place. The proposed developments have meant that certain improvements to the current site were put on hold and decisions regarding staffing were made in the context of an amalgamation. However, there is no evidence that pupils' standards or achievement have been affected. Housing development in the area has meant that areas of the school catchment area have been demolished. This had had an effect on the school roll but, with redevelopment, numbers of pupils are beginning to rise again.

As a result of the inspection on 29 and 30 April 2008, the school was asked to:

- ensure that work is always pitched at the right level for higher attaining pupils
- set more challenging targets for pupils to aim at
- develop clear systems to show the short-term progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

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 the pupils' achievement.



In the national tests of 2008, standards remained well below average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. However, from pupils' starting points, pupils made satisfactory progress. Current standards in Year 6 are well below expected levels but this is a small year group and contains a number of children who have learning difficulties and whose attainment was exceptionally low at the end of Year 2. At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 2, a higher proportion of pupils than has been the case in recent years are working at the levels expected for their age. The school's evidence shows that children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and satisfactory overall in the rest of the school.

The school has now in place a computerised system for capturing the attainment of individual pupils compared to national expectations, tracking their progress, setting targets and monitoring value added scores. It has also adopted the local authority system to track in more detail the progress in English, mathematics and science of the large numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a clear process of monitoring in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the tracking of progress of different interventions for groups of pupils, including the school's nurture group, is in place. It is early days, but the senior management team and teachers now have readily available information that will inform their decisions about whether all pupils are being adequately challenged and making the best progress they can.

Individual targets that the school sets for pupils are informed by the staff's extensive knowledge, their challenging aspirations and national expectations derived from data available. Many pupils who were spoken to know their targets and felt these were most effective in helping them learn when the class teacher was very clear what they needed to develop and 'push us to the limit' to achieve them. The new tracking system for pupils with learning difficulties supports the development of appropriate individual education plans linked closely to priorities in English and mathematics. There are many useful systems in place to monitor progress toward achieving targets, for example ongoing marking, progress books, learning ladders and detailed recording of skills and concepts gained. The school recognises that the effectiveness of these different systems is varied through the school to give clear information to pupils how to improve further and is taking appropriate steps to review them.

Staff have used their professional development time to improve their planning of work and activities to ensure that they are pitched at the correct level for all pupils, including high attainers. The majority of teachers' planning now has three separate learning objectives that different groups of pupils are expected to achieve. This process is effective in grouping pupils and offering them different opportunities to build on prior knowledge and develop skills further. A good example was in a mathematics lesson when pupils were working on direction. Some pupils were given practical apparatus whilst others were given large grids to help them discuss and plan routes. However, in some lessons, the learning objectives, even when broken down, are insufficiently clear to ensure consistently good progress of individual pupils and inform assessment of learning adequately. In some lessons, learning objectives were for the whole class. This meant that progress of individual pupils was, at best, satisfactory.

To challenge high attaining pupils more, the school has been working toward providing a more creative curriculum. By making new links across different subject areas and offering more opportunities for self-directed learning, the school has observed pupils taking more risks and there have been improvements in speaking, listening and writing. The school offers a good range of enrichment opportunities to pupils.

The school, including governors, acknowledges the start it has made in tackling the key issues. It recognises that many of the tools and structures for improvement are now in place and that they now need to be used consistently and rigorously to inform the learning and teaching in the classroom to ensure that all pupils are making good, and better, progress.

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

Stephen McShane
Her Majesty's Inspector