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Mr D Brown
The Headteacher
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Dear Mr Brown

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 1 July 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 discussion.

As a result of the inspection on the 14 and 15 May 2008, the school was asked to:

- improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage for teaching of writing and for supporting children's creative development and their knowledge and understanding of the world to ensure that progress is at least satisfactory in these areas
- extend opportunities for pupils to write for a range of purposes in subjects across the curriculum
- raise standards in mathematics and, in particular, ensure that more able pupils make quicker progress and reach the levels that they should.

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.

The inspection in May 2008 reported that progress was satisfactory in Key Stages 1 and 2 and was weak in Reception. Attainment was judged to be broadly average and the scrutiny of pupils' work confirms that this remains the case. The unvalidated data for the 2009 national tests indicate that results in English at the end of Year 6 are similar to those achieved in 2008 and are slightly higher in mathematics and science. However, this represents weak progress in relation to the group's above average attainment at the start of Key Stage 2. However, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make sound progress.

The school's tracking indicates that children in Reception are generally making good progress. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils reach broadly average standards and make satisfactory progress in writing and good progress in mathematics and reading. However, the school's data indicate that the pace of progress is more variable in Key Stage 2 where pupils make steadier progress in English than they do in mathematics.

With appropriate support from the local authority, the school has worked hard to address the issues in the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result, progress in this area is judged to be satisfactory. Staff changes to the Early Years Foundation Stage team have occurred since the last inspection. All adults are committed to working as a team with a common vision for improving the provision and outcomes for children. Significant changes have taken place to ensure that the environment in which children learn in is more conducive to supporting child-initiated play and adult-directed learning. As a result of the new 'letter and sound' approach to teaching and the introduction of a cursive handwriting script, children are beginning to develop the skills expected in order to write more confidently. Within the classroom, clear areas for learning are identified. One such example was seen as children used the 'Post Office' area to write letters and send parcels.

Opportunities for children to be more creative have been enhanced through the availability of a range of apparatus both in the classroom and in the outdoor learning environment. Topics to develop children's understanding and knowledge of the world have been introduced earlier in the year. As a result of this, and the use of art and themed days such as 'Africa Day', children are beginning to extend their understanding in this area. Visits to places such as to the zoo and the local post office and activities such as caring for their outdoor plants are providing children with valuable experience to make links between themselves and the wider world. Rightly, the Early Years Foundation Stage team is now considering ways in which to use the outdoor environment for the teaching and development of writing.

Since the last inspection staff have made some changes in mathematics. They have introduced a number of new initiatives to motivate pupils and encourage the desire to engage in this area of learning. Some children are now heard talking about mathematics and look forward to their mathematics lessons. Planning has been adapted to reflect differing abilities within a class, and in Years 5 and 6 pupils are taught according to ability. However, the impact of these changes on pupil progress is inconsistent throughout the school. It is particularly limited for those that find mathematics easy. Significant changes need to occur so that all pupils can make appropriate levels of progress. Current systems for tracking the progress made by different groups of pupils over time have not been sufficiently robust to support the necessary changes required. This, together with the limited time provided for monitoring the impact of new initiatives in this area, has resulted in inadequate progress since the last inspection. The school recognises the need to rapidly address this area of development and the headteacher is committed to ensuring that all staff receive the support and training needed to make the necessary changes.

The English subject leader has worked well along with other staff members to develop as many opportunities as possible for children to write for a range of purposes. Consequently, pupils are now more frequently writing in a variety of genres and are using school trips, themed days and topic themes as a springboard for extended writing. Together, these initiatives have had led to satisfactory progress in this area. Some good examples of English work were seen in subjects as diverse as design and technology, geography and personal, social and health education. As a result of these changes pupils are beginning to enjoy writing and find learning fun.

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

Susan Gadd
Her Majesty's Inspector