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Mrs Ros Williamson
Acting Headteacher
Parkside Primary School
Western Road
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Dear Mrs Williamson

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave me when I inspected your school on 25 February 2010, for the time you gave to our pre-inspection discussions and for the information which you, your deputy and the curriculum coordinators provided during my visit. Would you pass on my thanks to the governor, local authority representative and the group of pupils with whom I spoke.

Since the last inspection the headteacher has retired and the newly appointed deputy headteacher has taken maternity leave. The headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have been appointed for one and two terms respectively. A permanent headteacher takes up post in April. Pupil numbers have risen. You have also recently admitted a group of Eastern European pupils who speak English as an additional language.

As a result of the inspection on 15–16 June 2009, the school was asked to:

- accelerate pupils' progress in Key Stage 2, to raise standards and achievement in writing, mathematics and science
- make monitoring and evaluation more rigorous so that teachers know precisely how to improve their practice
- provide pupils with clear guidance so they can improve their work.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has demonstrated satisfactory progress overall in tackling the identified issues from the previous inspection. The pace of recovery and impact of improvement strategies has not been rapid. Nevertheless, Key Stage 2 pupils' progress has



improved overall and the decline in their standards has been arrested. This can be directly attributed to a substantial change in learning ethos and culture among staff and pupils. Both are now more accountable, informed and focused on achieving clearly defined targets. As a result, staff expectations and pupils' aspirations are higher. There is much work still to do but there is tangible evidence of impact against each of the key issues. Importantly, the school is equipping staff, and pupils with the necessary skills to facilitate higher quality learning and progress. The school recognises it is imperative the positive picture evident in classrooms is converted into substantially improved attainment in national tests if they are to break the cycle of pupils' underachievement.

In 2009, although the standards attained and pupils' achievement remained significantly below national averages, the overall achievement and attainment of pupils improved at Key Stage 2. Despite these gains there was some slippage in Key Stage 1 performance, particularly in pupils' writing. During the inspection, pupils were observed making broadly satisfactory progress throughout Key Stage 2. The school's robust tracking data confirms this, and shows some accelerated progress within year groups, among pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and for individual targeted pupils. However, there are concerns that Year 6 pupils may not meet their challenging targets, given the amount of lost ground they need to recover in their knowledge, skills and understanding in the short time available.

Staff have embraced the practical support, coaching and mentoring from local authority advisers, consultants and their peers. This has enhanced their confidence and competence. Consequently, the impact of their teaching is growing. This is reflected in better pupils' progress. Staff now have a clearer idea of how well pupils are doing and where the gaps in their learning are, and many are tailoring their planning and teaching to meet these individual needs. Giving pupils opportunities to demonstrate their new knowledge and understanding; ensuring lessons are engaging and allowing pupils to actively participate in their learning; and reinforcing the connections between subjects and/or themes are key features of staff's improved approach. Nevertheless, some inconsistency remains.

The quality of marking and assessment is much improved. It has evolved from being largely celebratory to clearly identifying the next steps in pupils' learning. Pupils are very aware of how well they are doing and what is expected of them because clear learning objectives and individual success criteria are routinely shared with them. They can quote their specific literacy and numeracy targets. As well as receiving regular feedback on their work, they are learning to self, and peer, assess. Resultant targets are more meaningful. This is helping them to begin to take some responsibility for their own learning.

Senior leaders are providing clear educational direction. In the short time you and your deputy have been in post you have begun to strategically address the deep-rooted issues afflicting the school. You are well supported by a committed and hard working staff. Management capacity has been reinforced by distributing leadership



more widely through the curriculum coordinator roles. Your impact is evident in the improved conditions for learning and the fledgling success of the improvement strategies. The more focused and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching and quality of planning; accuracy of assessment and suitability of specific interventions, underpin pupils' improved learning and progress. It is also helping to ensure that you have a realistic awareness of the impact of actions taken and their current effectiveness.

The local authority statement of action meets requirements. It provides a useful framework for driving improvement, and evaluating the effectiveness of actions taken. The local authority is providing valuable support, guidance and challenge to the school, which is proving decisive to the recovery process. Governors are supportive, but the extent to which they challenge the school is less evident.

This monitoring inspection included a check on the school's safeguarding procedures and found that they meet current requirements.

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

John Young
Her Majesty's Inspector