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Mrs Rosemary Medhurst and Mrs Catherine McNulty
The Headteachers
Northwood Primary School
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Dear Mrs Medhurst and Mrs McNulty

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 26 November 2009 and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Would you also pass on my thanks to the children who were so helpful and enthusiastic when I spoke to them and to your chair of governors for her time during the afternoon. I note that since the last inspection the arrangement of co-headteachers has now become fully established and that two new teachers have been appointed.

As a result of the inspection on 24 and 25 November 2008, the school was asked to:

- strengthen the way leaders evaluate teaching and the achievement of learners so that all pupils make good progress
- ensure planning meets the needs of all ability groups and particularly the most able
- ease the transition for pupils between the Reception Year and Year 1.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement. **Good progress** had been made with the issues relating to the school's provision. Nevertheless, pending the full and sustained impact of these improvements, overall progress, relative to pupils' outcomes, is only satisfactory.

Since the previous inspection, the leaders have worked successfully to analyse and evaluate the achievement of all pupils and the quality of teaching they receive. This was evident both from documents provided and from observations in lessons. As part of this, satisfactory support has been provided by the local authority through its



monitoring of performance and through the use of specialist expertise when it has been needed.

Your latest test results show that attainment in Year 6 fell slightly from 2008, but the progress these pupils made through Years 3 to 6 was satisfactory. In addition, there was a significant improvement in mathematics and the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in both English and mathematics, confirming that more able pupils are now challenged well. From my observations in lessons there is evidence that the rate of progress for older pupils is steadily improving and your challenging targets set for the next year could well be achieved. This is due to a better focus by teachers throughout the school in making sure that all lessons are challenging and help pupils move on more rapidly. It also means that the levels of 'catch-up' needed at the top end of the school are now not so high. As you rightly said, leaders have used their monitoring of teaching to define how expertise can be improved. Its success can be seen in the higher proportion of lessons which are now being assessed as good both by yourselves and by external consultants. There are also some lessons which are outstanding and these are being used to set examples of best practice for others. In one lesson, good use was made of a problem-solving exercise to make pupils think harder and use their previous knowledge to help them solve the problem. Many of the pupils showed really good levels of concentration and asked highly pertinent questions. However, their lack of confidence was shown in their depth of understanding, such as when estimating the answer and working out a strategy to confirm it. Nevertheless, the teacher persevered and by the end nearly all had made good gains in areas they had not previously understood.

Pupils are attaining below average standards by the end of Year 2. Again, their progress is satisfactory given the low starting points on entry to the school and the good start they make in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This was noticeable in a Year 1 numeracy lesson where some pupils had difficulty in deciding what number came between 15 and 17, whilst others were not totally confident they had the right answer. The teacher's planning was designed well to make sure these number bonds were reinforced at various points in the lesson.

The two headteachers work well together and acknowledge that, in the past, professional development of teachers had been too general, relying on the training itself rather than on staff's individual needs. This has radically changed. Teachers are now held accountable for the progress of their class and how well they are doing relative to their starting points. Any further development is specifically targeted, such as on how to develop challenging work or how to move on the learning of the more able. Planning is more consistent and teachers regularly refer to what is being learnt in each lesson. Pupils also have a clearer idea of how well they are doing from the targets in their books and the generally helpful marking. As yet, this is at an early stage. Evaluation of pupils' progress this term shows a better picture with many working at, or above, the predicted levels of progress expected in one term. If this continues it all bodes well for the future. In essence, the processes are successfully in place to raise the outcomes for pupils, but the latter has not yet been



achieved. By the rearranging of expertise of staff, good transition arrangements have been developed between the Reception Year and Year 1. Those pupils who need more confidence in personal or academic skills have the opportunity to do so and are becoming more mature in their outlook and endeavours. In an effort to improve this, further plans are underway to provide some more outdoor provision for those in Year 1.

Pupils continue to be well behaved, energetic and polite. They welcome the chance to talk about their school and say that they feel they are being given better challenges in their work. Pastoral provision is a particular strength and the school is seen to be at the heart of the community. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and, due to the high level of focus, attendance levels have risen to above both the local authority and national average.

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

David Collard
Additional Inspector

