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9 December 2009

Mrs C Koerner  
The Headteacher  
Sharps Copse Primary and Nursery School  
Prospect Lane  
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Hampshire  
PO9 5PE

Dear Mrs Koerner

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 1 December 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I would be grateful if you would also pass my thanks on to the staff, pupils and governors for the warmth of their welcome and the significant part they played in the inspection visit.

I note that since the last inspection new members of staff have been appointed, three as newly qualified teachers and two as learning support assistants.

As a result of the inspection on 18 and 19 November 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards in English and mathematics by improving the rate of progress pupils make over time
- improve the quality of teaching and learning to consistently meet the needs of pupils of all abilities and help them to understand how to improve
- develop the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum.

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.

Pupils join the school in Reception with a range of skills, knowledge and understanding in the different areas of learning. In sounds, letters and writing their skills are well below those expected for their age. However in numbers, labels and counting, as well as some elements of personal, emotional and social development,



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

their skills are appropriate for their age. Since the last inspection pupils continue to make good progress in Reception and enter Year 1 with the necessary skills for their next stage of development.

As pupils move through the school the rate of progress in English and mathematics generally improves but is variable. In the 2009 end of Year 6 tests pupils made satisfactory progress in English and mathematics and good progress in science. Although overall progress remains satisfactory since the last inspection this is within an improving trend. Attainment over time remains low but is also improving. As a result of the satisfactory progress and low attainment, overall achievement is satisfactory.

On the whole pupils enjoy coming to school and talk favourably about those subjects that are creative and practical, such as art. Although overall attendance is still low, there has been an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils feel very safe in school and know that they can turn to any adult for help and support at any time.

The school is able to demonstrate the changes that have taken place in information and communication technology since the last inspection. The school has increased the number of computers and laptops available to pupils across different age ranges. Year 6 pupils use laptops in booster lessons as do some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Training has taken place to ensure that the interactive whiteboards are used regularly and that pupils utilise a range of software to help them learn more effectively. Early indications suggest that pupils are more engaged in their learning as a result of these improvements.

Although teaching and learning remain satisfactory overall, there are clear indicators that these aspects have been improved since the last inspection. Where teaching is at its strongest lessons proceed at a brisk pace and teachers' good subject knowledge develops pupils' understanding of new concepts. In-depth teacher questioning and the confident use of success criteria in the best lessons ensure that pupils make good progress. Where teaching is satisfactory the majority of lessons tend to proceed at a slow pace and planning does not always reflect pupils' prior assessments. Pupils are now fully aware of how to improve their work by making reference to their targets or by using a system called 'VCOP' (vocabulary, connectives, openers and punctuation) to either assess their own work or that of their peers.

To help improve the quality of teaching and learning and raise standards in English and mathematics, the school has taken time to explore how pupils learn and have developed an effective whole-school approach to assessment. Guidelines are now in place to help support all staff in ensuring that consistent methods are now adopted during assessment opportunities. These are underpinned by the setting of aspirational targets for pupils. The school has started the process of moderating assessments to ensure that judgments are accurate and consistent across the school and within English and mathematics. However, as the school recognises, it is still too



early for this process to provide a full and accurate picture of pupil progress to counteract some of the unreliable assessments made in the past. Information from the new assessments is beginning to be used in teacher planning. To increase the accountability of all staff and to ensure that pupils make more rapid progress as they move through the school, a system of 'Country conversation' has been recently introduced. This involves staff meeting at regular intervals to discuss pupils' current attainment, future targets and possible intervention to improve overall progress in English and mathematics.

The headteacher has placed a strong emphasis on staff development to help bring about the necessary changes since the last inspection. Consequently, the assistant headteacher has actively cultivated coaching skills within middle management. An external consultant has been used to extend the subject knowledge of learning support staff and some teachers in mathematics. Senior and middle managers are involved in monitoring activities ranging from lesson observations, sampling pupils' work, scrutinising teacher planning and talking to pupils. The school's self-evaluation accurately identifies the areas for improvements.

Since the last inspection there has been a team effort to bring about change. As a result, there is some evidence that pupil achievement is beginning to improve in English and mathematics as a result of greater use in information and communication technology and improvements to assessments, teaching and learning. As many of these developments are in their early stages, it is not possible at this point to see the full impact they have had on pupil outcomes. Together, these changes and the strong commitment of all staff to meet these challenges indicate that the school has made satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity to make further improvements.

The local authority has provided satisfactory support in facilitating the development of the school improvement plan. More recently it has agreed that members of staff will attend training to help further develop reading within the school.

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

