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Mr K Guest
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Dear Mr Guest

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help you and your staff gave me when I inspected your school on Thursday 24 September, for the time you gave in setting up the inspection when I arrived and for the information you provided during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the teaching staff and to the pupils who gave up their time to talk to me.

As a result of the inspection on 9 and 10 September 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards by ensuring that all groups make good progress
- extend the range of cultural traditions studied in order to further engage and stimulate pupils, especially those with a Black African heritage
- increase links between subject, including the integration of information, communication and 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 capacity for sustained improvement.

The school has emerged from a turbulent period of staffing over the last two years. Restructuring of the senior leadership team has helped to focus on improving teaching, learning and use of assessment. Through professional development opportunities from external support, combined with formal observations and coaching, some teaching is now consistently good. Leaders recognise that this has to be embedded consistently across the whole school.

Accurate use of assessment data is helping teachers to monitor the progress of groups and individuals more closely than before and target setting is more challenging. Senior leaders determine patterns of underachievement and are increasingly taking action to revise the curriculum and teaching methods. A sharper



focus on outcomes helps some teachers to plan lessons more carefully to match pupils' different levels of attainment and their individual targets. The impact of this work in establishing much higher patterns of attainment for all groups of pupils is still emerging.

Pupils enter the school with standards below, and in some cases well below, those expected for their age. High proportions of pupils join and leave the school at times other than at the start of the school year. This contributes to the very high proportion of pupils at the early stages of English acquisition, and the much higher-than-average proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Unvalidated school data for end of Key Stage 2 test results in 2009 show a slight improvement in standards in English, but all core subjects still remain below national averages. Indications from the school's current work and predictions for 2010 suggest that Year 6 pupils are on track to attain higher standards in their end of key stage tests in 2010. Their attainment on entry to Year 6 was slightly higher than that of the previous cohort, and more pupils are expected to make at least satisfactory progress in mathematics. From low attainment on entry, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. A few have made outstanding progress by exceeding targets over the key stage or within the period of time from when they joined the school to leaving in Year 6. The same is true for some pupils who are learning English as an additional language, a result of effective use of learning support in lessons and one-to-one sessions.

Evaluating the impact of learning support has enabled leaders to deploy resources more effectively in order to meet pupils' needs across the whole school. This shows leaders' increasingly strategic view in seeking how best to try and close gaps in achievement. This has been more successful for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities than for other groups of pupils. For example, there is still a gap between boys' and girls' attainment. Across the school, tracking data show a mixed picture of pupils' progress over time, with pockets of good progress and pockets of underachievement. Standards reached by boys, especially in English, have yet to improve. Standards reached by Black African pupils rose slightly in mathematics in 2009, but improvement in reading and writing is more limited. Improving standards in writing and end of key stage results in mathematics are very high priorities this year.

In Year 6 lessons pupils made at least satisfactory progress. Some more able pupils made good progress because work was well matched to their levels of ability. Good pace captured pupils' enthusiasm and probing questions effectively assessed pupils' understanding. Less successful teaching in other year groups did not take sufficient account of the range of needs in the class. Opportunities to assess pupils' understanding were missed and some pupils were frustrated with the pace of learning. Some struggled to keep up while others had completed the work and



needed more challenge. Stretching the more able pupils remains an area for improvement.

Effective revisions to the curriculum include theme weeks linked to Black History week and the school's own culture and countries week. There is greater use of resources from non-Western cultures, such as poems by West Indian authors. Pupils develop a broad understanding of values and traditions in different cultures. Learning materials from other cultures in theme weeks are also built into topic work for termly planning. Evidence from lessons and talking to pupils shows improved engagement of Black African pupils and pupils' increased understanding of cultures, particularly those represented in school. Vibrant displays celebrate pupils' achievements in learning about different cultures.

Investment in computers and a range of software packages has enthused pupils, helping them to better engage in research for all subjects. Pupils comment that use of information and communication technologies in lessons has improved a lot. Teachers use electronic whiteboards effectively to take pupils through different kinds of problem solving. Pupils enjoy regular opportunities to use the new computer suite to help them improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils have a good understanding of internet safety.

Reports by the local authority acknowledge that standards remain low and hold the school to account for trialling different approaches to raising attainment, learning and progress. The local authority knows the school well and has been able to provide well-targeted support. Challenge advisers have worked closely with leaders to evaluate how best to meet objectives in the development plan. The school has responded positively to recommendations from external advisers. Governors are carefully tracking how senior leaders, including those in new positions of responsibility, are driving improvement. Leaders have identified the right priorities for development and the school has the capacity to continue to make improvements.

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

Joanna Beckford-Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector