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Mrs A Sheppard
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Sheppard

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school with Angela Konarzewski on 18 November 2009. Thank you for the information which you provided before and during our visit. Please convey our gratitude to the staff and pupils who met with us as well as to the governors and the school improvement partner.

Since the inspection in November 2008, several new senior staff have joined the school. There is a new leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage and two deputy headteachers took up their posts in September 2009. Two assistant headteachers are on long-term sickness leave. There is now a full complement of governors as vacancies have been filled. Additional pupils have been admitted in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the school is set to become a four-form entry establishment, with significant additional buildings planned.

As a result of the inspection on 6–7 November 2008, the school was asked to:

- improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and in particular ensure that teaching places a greater focus on children's learning
- improve the ways in which teachers use assessment information, and ensure that work is more challenging for pupils of all abilities, particularly the more able
- develop the roles of middle managers and governors.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements, and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Pupils' progress is improving and the standards attained by the end of Year 2 in 2009 were higher than in 2008 and above average. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 increased markedly in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's Year 6 tests results for 2009 have yet to be finalised, pending some external checks. Teachers' assessments indicate some improvement in progress. As in 2008, a broadly average proportion of pupils reached the nationally expected Level 4 standards in English and mathematics. However, the proportion that attained the higher Level 5, while also in line with national averages, increased. In lessons observed, pupils' behaviour was good. They were interested in their work and sustained their concentration well. Pupils are happy at the school and the quality of pupils' personal development and well-being remains a strength.

The new leader and the other staff have made concerted and successful efforts to tackle the weaknesses identified in the Early Years Foundation Stage in the previous inspection. Teaching is now based clearly on what children are expected to learn and opportunities for assessment are identified appropriately. The balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities has improved and the provision for learning outdoors is now more extensive. The assessments in the summer of 2009, which were checked by the local authority, indicate that children's progress is improving, and this is confirmed by inspection evidence. Currently no staff have been trained in paediatric first aid and the school needs to ensure that training planned for the start of next month is successfully completed.

The school benefits from its new senior leadership team of the headteacher and her two deputies, who share a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. This is based on a widening range of self-evaluation strategies, and priorities are set out in the school development plan with accompanying action plans, although in places these lack sufficient precision in timescales and in ways of evaluating success. It is intended that these documents will be developed further with middle managers and governors to help them to become more accountable in carrying out their roles. Although there have been some necessary adjustments as a result of the absence of two assistant headteachers, senior leaders have considered carefully how they plan to develop leadership and management in depth in the school and to involve all staff more closely in promoting and checking pupils' progress.

Well-conceived approaches are being used to develop the role of middle managers so that they are equipped with the necessary skills. These approaches are also ensuring that their colleagues appreciate the positive contribution middle managers can make to helping pupils to do better and to helping teachers share and develop their practice. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked and detailed information has been used by senior staff to discuss progress with staff in each year group. It is about to be employed as the basis for termly discussions with the class teacher of the progress made by pupils in each class. Lessons observed showed some impact of the school's efforts to match work more carefully to pupils' needs, but this was not consistent in the classrooms visited, particularly for more able pupils. The governing



body has identified practical ways in which it can find out for itself how well the school is doing. A system where governors are linked with particular subjects or aspects is being developed and some visits have taken place, with brief reports written. It is acknowledged that this is at an early stage of development and is not yet systematic enough.

The local authority has provided satisfactory support. The school improvement partner has supported the headteacher in the creation of the new leadership team and the local authority is helping to plan forthcoming training for middle managers. A training programme has also been identified to help governors to develop their role further.

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

Grahame Sherfield
Her Majesty's Inspector

