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Ms Shirley Patterson
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Dear Ms Patterson

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 19 November 2009, for the time you gave to our discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please thank the pupils, staff and the chair of governors who gave their time to the discussions.

Since the last inspection, there have been minimal changes to staffing. However, there is some new building work that is causing disruption to classes.

As a result of the inspection on 19–20 November 2008, the school was asked to:

- ensure that assessment was used more carefully in all classes to match work more accurately to pupils' abilities and their specific needs
- make better use of marking and target setting to help pupils understand how to improve their work
- make sharper use of assessment information in all years to check pupils' rates of progress and to tackle swiftly any dips in progress.

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

There have been good improvements in pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 since the last inspection. In both 2008 and 2009, national test results have been significantly above those nationally and particularly so in English. While progress from pupils' broadly average starting points has been good overall, it has been outstanding in English, mathematics and science between Years 2 and 6. This is because there has been some exceptional teaching in these classes. Progress in Years 1 and 2, while improved, remains an area that the school is rightly

concentrating on. Here, achievement is not so strong, as pupils are not yet reaching the same high levels of progress that they are in Years 3 to 6.

The leadership team has rearranged teaching groups across the school to enable expertise to be shared. This is having a positive effect, especially on raising the expectations of staff about what pupils are capable of achieving. As part of this, there is now a much sharper focus on the use of assessment. Whole-school analysis is evaluated carefully and intervention for any pupils who are seen to be falling behind is rapid and effective. For example, in one class of younger pupils, a good proportion have made rapid progress in their writing, which can be demonstrated clearly from the regular assessments that are made each term or half term. Effective assessment has given the leadership team a very clear picture of progress, so that they can target those pupils who need help. There is still some variability in how well these assessments are used in each class to ensure that work meets all abilities and needs, depending on the expertise of the teacher, but good progress is being made towards eliminating this.

In lessons, teachers are demonstrating their improved use of ongoing assessment by good questioning techniques to probe pupils' understanding. Good vocabulary is encouraged and pupils are expected to think for themselves. In one literacy class, for example, pupils were encouraged to think up words that could replace the word 'gigantic' and, with the use of story maps, were helped to use their imagination. In Year 1, new developments in teaching methods are improving the balance between play and more formal learning. As a result, pupils are developing their independence, as well as learning new skills, such as counting and measuring. However, some variability remains as to how well this is developed in different classes.

Improved use of marking and target setting mean that pupils now understand the targets they have been set and how they can improve. They are confident to talk about their group targets as well as some specific individual targets. Not yet so well developed, particularly for the younger ones, is pupils' understanding of how these relate to National Curriculum levels. This is, rightly, part of the school's future development plans.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning remain highly positive. They are enthusiastic learners and want to do their best. In conversation, they talk about the many opportunities they are offered and how they think relationships are very strong throughout the school. They have a clear sense of right and wrong. A lot has been done to improve the attendance of those who were persistently absent by working closely with families. This has helped raise attendance to above the national average.

The strong and decisive leadership team has demonstrated its commitment to improving the school. It has set challenging targets for pupils and teachers and there is a whole-school expectation that these will be achieved. Good use of

expertise has been made by the headteacher who has ensured that there are complementary skills at each layer of leadership. For example, responsibilities have been combined or shared so that ideas can be followed through to completion. A good example of this is how well results from children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have been evaluated and then used to check progress rates in Year 1 and into Year 2. In addition, expertise from the local authority and other agencies has been used well to monitor improvements and to provide specialist help, for example in helping to define the most important areas for improvement. The developments that have taken place and the sustained level of improvement in pupils' attainment and progress all indicate a school that is moving forward well.

I hope 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
Lead inspector