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Mrs Barbara Dunn
The Headteacher
St Luke's CofE Primary School
Fernhead Road
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Dear Mrs Dunn

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 25 and 26 November 2009 and for the information you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my particular thanks to the staff I met formally or talked with, to your chair of governors, the representative from the local authority and the groups of pupils who met with me to share their perspectives of the school.

Following a fall for the past two years, pupil numbers have increased this term. Currently there are 162 pupils on roll and those registered to join the Reception class in January 2010 should take the figure above 180. A new inclusion manager joined the school in January 2009. In September two teachers, both with experience of working in the school (as a long term supply teacher and a student teacher respectively), were appointed to permanent contracts. Another teacher was appointed for a year to provide additional support in classes and to cover for teachers' leadership or planning, preparation and assessment time. Two teachers who recently completed their induction year at St Luke's took on subject leadership responsibilities this term.

As a result of the inspection on 12 and 13 November 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards in mathematics by raising the level of challenge for pupils of all abilities
- ensure that pupils are consistently given work that is well matched to their differing needs and abilities
- develop systems for providing pupils with individual targets to help them identify what they need to do to improve.

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



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Overall, standards at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2009 were not as high as at the time of the last inspection. However, this was due to different starting points and the fact that a high proportion of the children were summer born and therefore did not start school until the spring term. The exception to this is the positive impact the whole-school focus on the teaching of mathematics had on improving children's early counting and calculating skills.

Standards across the rest of the school are still affected to a greater or lesser extent by the legacy of weak teaching and high staff turnover. This had an adverse impact on standards at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2009. It was compounded by staff absence and pupil mobility during Year 2 and a high proportion of pupils with communication and language difficulties. Although most pupils made progress last year, only half made better than expected progress in reading and writing and the proportion reaching Level 2 fell significantly. Progress was better in mathematics and standards remained similar to 2008. The school has put appropriate strategies in place to meet pupils' specific needs and to try to accelerate progress in Year 3.

The focus on mathematics, together with targeted support, also had a positive impact at the end of Key Stage 2. Most pupils made better than expected progress over the course of Year 6, with over 40% improving by a whole level or more, and the proportion of pupils making the expected rate of progress from the beginning of Year 3 almost doubled. Although this was not enough to fully eradicate previous underachievement, the proportions of pupils reaching both Level 4 and Level 5 rose considerably. Additional teaching, in partnership with an advanced skills teacher, had a similar impact on science standards. On the other hand, the whole school focus on improving writing has not yet had the same impact and the number of pupils reaching Level 4 in English fell below 65%. Nevertheless, for the first time in recent years, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2009 were not significantly lower than those found nationally and there is evidence that focused work with Black Caribbean pupils has helped to improve their achievement.

Standards in mathematics are rising across the school. The training and support for staff, supported by the local authority, together with targeted interventions have been effective. Data indicates that across the school the very large majority of pupils made progress last year and that in most classes over 60% made better than expected progress. As a result, around three quarters of pupils are reaching the expected level for their age, or are on track to do so by the end of Year 6. The school knows that there is more to be done to embed recent improvements so that high quality classroom teaching of mathematics becomes the norm and reduces the need for interventions or additional support.

Regular meetings between senior leaders and class teachers to discuss pupils' progress are now established practice. More recently, the school has moved from using tests to assess standards and progress to ongoing assessment by teachers against clear criteria. This is improving the quality of assessment, particularly in Key



Stage 2 where it has been in place longer, both in terms of the accuracy of judgements and in teachers identifying next steps in pupils' learning. Teachers are using this information to group pupils and match activities to different abilities in lessons. However, as yet they are not differentiating the criteria that help pupils assess their learning and sometimes activities differ according to the amount of work to be completed rather than the challenge they provide. More recently, the school has built on its use of targets for groups of pupils by introducing them at an individual level to help each pupil understand what they need to do to improve. The school is right when it says it is too early to see the impact. Pupils certainly know that they have the targets and what they are, but as yet they do not have a sense of the time in which they have to achieve them.

The headteacher, governors and the local authority are optimistic for the future of the school. Staffing is more stable and there is a common sense of purpose. The senior team has been strengthened by the appointment of the inclusion manager and the governing body is far more aware of its responsibilities to challenge as well as support. Regular monitoring gives an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and pupils' learning and progress and is used to identify where further improvement is needed and inform professional development. Action plans are clearly focused on the key priorities, although they lack sharpness in defining responsibilities, costs and targets. Support from the local authority in recent years has been good and appreciated by staff at all levels. An appropriate exit strategy has been planned which is reducing the direct support available, but through London Challenge will pair the school with another from next term to provide focused support for the further development of writing.

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

Alison Storey
Her Majesty's Inspector

