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Mrs Dawn Neal
Surfleet Seas End Primary School
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Dear Mrs Neal

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 11 December 2009, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit.

The school is in a hard federation with a small local school. There is a joint governing body. The headteacher is responsible for both schools. Staff share responsibilities and some teach in both schools.

As a result of the inspection on 10-11 December 2008, the school was asked to: increase staff and governors' skills in rigorously evaluating pupil's progress over time; ensure that the curriculum provides links between subjects and progression in children's skills; ensure that teachers provide useful and relevant advice to children on how to improve their work; share the best practice to ensure that expectations and challenge for children are consistently high.

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.

Children enter the school with knowledge, understanding and skills which are broadly average. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage to reach standards that are close to average as they enter Year 1. Attainment varies from year to year because of the relatively small number of children in each cohort. In 2009, the provisional results for Year 2 pupils were broadly average overall, in reading and mathematics. They were below average in writing. The school has rightly identified writing as a priority for improvement in 2009/10. Provisional test results for Year 6 pupils in 2009 improved to be just above average with a marked increase in the proportion achieving Level 5 in English. The proportion achieving



national expectations in mathematics and science was above average. Provisional data indicate that pupils made at least satisfactory progress from their starting points. Pupils with special educational needs made good progress. The school has improved its system for assessing pupils and recording data on their performance, allowing staff to identify pupils' progress towards their targets. There are improving rates of progress across the school, particularly in reading and mathematics.

In the lessons observed, pupils made at least satisfactory and often good progress. They settled to work and concentrated well. They collaborated effectively in pairs or groups. Most were eager to share their work with others and to answer teachers' questions. However, on occasion, some lacked confidence and teachers did not always adjust their approach enough to bring them into discussion.

The school has prioritised aspects of planning and teaching effectively. Teaching is improving. The best teaching is challenging and work is well planned to match pupils' attainment and needs. Teachers set clear learning objectives and share these with pupils. They are beginning to focus pupils on smaller steps in their work. Nevertheless, in half the lessons, expectations of pupils were not sufficiently clear and the pace of learning slowed.

As a result of concerted action on assessment, systems are now more consistent and this is beginning to have an impact on pupils' achievement. A new system for using targets with pupils is in its early stages but older pupils understand how to use their targets to help improve their work. In other classes, targets are identified but there is less evidence of them being reviewed. The revised marking policy is clear and focused on helping pupils to improve their work. Teachers generally use it consistently though the quality of comments varies across classes.

Since September 2009, the school has used general themes as a framework for planning work in the foundation subjects. Pupils were positive about the opportunities provided for writing, using skills learnt in literacy lessons, as part of thematic work. This included writing an aboriginal story and instructions on how to make a lamp.

The headteacher and senior teacher have a very clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors have adopted a 'duty governor' role which involves a formal visit by a governor each month to review the school's progress. There is a clear action plan which is beginning to have an impact on improvement. The recent federation has strengthened capacity to improve by sharing expertise and responsibilities across both schools, enabling joint planning, staff training and pooled use of resources. The local authority has provided useful access to projects related to improving assessment and pupils' writing. Some initiatives are at an early stage but the school's thorough monitoring and evaluation suggest that they are effective.

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

Martin Cragg
Her Majesty's Inspector