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Miss Jean Meredith
Headteacher
Milton Primary School
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Dear Miss Meredith

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 14 and 15 October 2009, and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please pass my thanks to the pupils and governors for the time they gave to share their views with me.

Since the last inspection the deputy headteacher has taken maternity leave. Governors have appointed two assistant headteachers from the existing senior leadership team. In addition the senior leadership team has been augmented by a new member of staff who joined the school in September to take responsibility for literacy and creativity.

As a result of the inspection on 16-17 September 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards, especially of the more able pupils in writing
- ensure that teachers provide challenge for all pupils by planning the small steps needed to enable effective learning to take place, communicating them successfully to the pupils and focusing the activities on the planned outcomes
- develop the leadership and management skills of the senior leaders
- develop a systematic and more rigorous approach to school self-evaluation and improvement, and ensure that pupils' targets provide sufficient challenge.

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 a better capacity for sustained improvement.



Pupils' achievement has improved as a result of the school addressing the issues raised at the last inspection. Better progress is most apparent in Years 1 and 2 where the school has ensured more pupils are working at a higher level, particularly in writing and mathematics. Although Year 6 test results in 2009 are similar to 2008, overall achievement has improved by the time pupils leave the school. From lower starting points, pupils are making more progress, particularly in writing. The school is taking further steps to ensure potentially vulnerable pupils receive the additional support they need to do well. Although there is room for further improvement, more able pupils are making better progress because the school has increased expectations of what these pupils can achieve. Pupils like the increased opportunities they now have to be more positively involved in improving many aspects of the school. Until quite recently, standards reached by the end of the end of Reception have been below average. Current standards are higher as a result of the much better progress children are now making in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In some year groups in Key Stage 2, pupils do not make consistently good progress because of weaknesses in teaching. Senior leadership's willingness to tackle these flaws and the growing track record of better outcomes is evidence of the school's improved capacity for sustained improvement.

Most lessons have appropriate learning objectives that often support teachers in better identifying the steps in learning, particularly for lower attaining pupils. A number of strategies have led to improvements in writing, for instance the greater use of role play and improved guidance on how text can be structured. Informative displays in every classroom ensure pupils know their current levels and targets. Good progress was observed when the content of lessons was linked to pupils' targets. The Reception teacher expertly used examples of pupils' work, designing parachutes, to highlight how a top notch outcome could be achieved. The school is beginning to develop success criteria to help pupils better visualise the outcomes at different levels. This is not yet well established. Therefore pupils, particularly the most able, can not always achieve their targets.

The more effective lessons involved short introductions, followed by pupils working on a range of appropriate activities with just the right amount of adult support. Teachers asked questions that required pupils to explain their thinking and sometimes involved paired discussion before a response could be made. In the less effective lessons, pupils' concentration waned and teaching assistants could not provide support because introductions were too long. The outcomes in mathematics are better when teachers link the content to application from the very start and inject greater pace by introducing an element of competition. A boy spoke of the pride he took in his work because of the praise he received when he managed to complete more questions than anyone else. The regular use of house-points is increasing enjoyment levels and is helping most pupils appreciate the outcomes being strived for.

The school has taken steps to improve the quality of leadership by restructuring the senior team and ensuring roles and responsibilities are better matched to the needs

of the school. Senior leaders work well together in formulating agreed approaches to teaching. There is a commendable willingness amongst all staff to try new ideas but some leaders are uncertain about what is needed to ensure pupils make good progress. The school recognises that many leaders lack the confidence that comes with achieving success. The school is giving leaders greater insights into good and outstanding practice by visiting other schools. A notable success since the last inspection is the development of a more accurate and user-friendly approach to assessing and monitoring the progress made by all pupils. Crucially, this tracking system is based on the assumption that all pupils will achieve more challenging targets.

The school has had unavoidable problems over staffing that have prevented it from improving more quickly. The headteacher continues to have a clear idea of the school's strengths and weaknesses, although other leaders are less secure in their judgements. More rigour is being introduced into the school's monitoring, for instance, steps were taken to improve teachers' assessment as soon as evidence emerged of inaccuracies in some year groups. The school has improved its ability to ensure equality by considering more carefully the outcomes for different groups. The governors' curriculum committee is now a well established feature and is providing a useful forum for checking the work of the school.

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

Kevin Sheldrick
Her Majesty's Inspector