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21 October 2009

Mrs S May  
Ball Green Primary School  
Whitfield Road  
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Dear Mrs May

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 19-20 October 2009, for the time you gave to our discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I am also grateful to your staff and pupils for the welcome they gave me; to your chair of governors, the local authority representative and to your assistant headteacher for meeting with me. I am especially grateful to you for the explanations of the school's contextual changes since the last inspection in October 2008, particularly regarding the staffing in Years 3 and 4.

As a result of the inspection on 9–10 October 2008 the school was asked to:

- ensure a whole school approach to the teaching of calculation in Years 1 to 6 is introduced to raise pupils' standards in mathematics
- ensure all pupils' learning, especially that of the more able, is always effectively challenged so their rate of progress improves more quickly in all subjects
- develop the use of the outdoor area for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to better support the learning throughout the day.

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

The school has responded positively to the issues identified at its inspection in October 2008. The 2009 Key Stage 2 results are slightly better than those in 2008, particularly for the more able. The school's own data for the current Year 6 indicate that standards in mathematics, reading and science are beginning to rise by the end

of Key Stage 2. However, the proportion of pupils achieving national expectations at age 11 remains below average overall, reflecting a legacy of underachievement. Nonetheless, this represents satisfactory progress from starting points which were low. Senior leaders are aware of the reasons for this and have taken appropriate steps to further improve standards throughout the school. For example, they have analysed the assessment data and samples of pupils' work to identify where individuals need to improve. Tracking systems for individual pupils are now robust and are capable of identifying any underachievement and setting challenging targets for all pupils, particularly those in Years 4, 5 and 6. Additional support is provided through teaching assistants, for example, booster classes for the more and less able. There are a growing number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities who are supported well. These pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points.

Teaching is consistently satisfactory, with much that is good. This is an improvement since the inspection in October 2008. Consequently, most pupils are now making satisfactory and often good progress in lessons. Joint lesson observations, scrutiny of planning and pupils' books confirm these improvements. In the best lessons seen, teachers show a good subject knowledge and understanding and make their lessons enjoyable. The school's approach to teaching calculation in Years 1 to 6 is much improved and is helping pupils to make better progress. As one pupil said, 'I enjoy learning maths because it is fun.' Teachers plan lessons with a range of interesting and stimulating activities to meet the different needs of pupils. However, these do not always fully meet the needs of all pupils sufficiently to engage their complete interest. The pace of learning is at times not sufficiently brisk to allow good progress to be made. Marking in books and individual pupil target setting are generally helpful and identify what pupils have done well and what they need to do to improve. Most pupils spoke of receiving much more help and guidance on how to improve their work. However, this is not yet consistent across the school.

There have been significant improvements to the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, including the Nursery, particularly in the outside play area. Children are now getting off to a good start, particularly in their social and emotional development. Standards are beginning to rise in all areas of communication, language and literacy skills and this is set to have a good effect on pupils as they move into Year 1. This is partly because of the opportunity for children to settle in, develop their social skills and work and play independently re-enforced through the systematic teaching of phonics on a daily basis, often through games and rhymes which interest and motivate children. Teachers are now familiar with and more confident in using the data to inform both their planning and to address the needs of individual children through a range of indoor and outdoor activities. Children show sustained concentration for extended periods, whether learning through play, listening to teachers or responding to questions.

The headteacher has been tireless in improving the school at all levels. Other key factors in judging that the school is improving its capacity to sustain further

improvements include the accuracy of assessments, the developing expertise of subject leaders and the powerful role modelling of excellent teaching provided by some teachers. Since the last inspection in 2008, there have been several changes in staffing. The senior leadership team has been strengthened and good support and challenge has been provided by the local authority through its intensive support programme and the school improvement partner. Governors are more closely involved in supporting and challenging the school and are becoming more involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. Staff are now held to account through the effective monitoring systems and good support is given through opportunities for coaching, mentoring and sharing good practice through modelling. The capacity for sustained improvement is good because of the success already evident in improved outcomes for pupils, particularly in mathematics and for the more able. This is as a result of the determination of the headteacher and senior leaders and the commitment and enthusiasm of staff at all levels.

All safeguarding regulations and duties are fully met and arrangements and policies for safeguarding are in line with government requirements and are systematically reviewed. All staff have been suitably trained and have the skills and expertise required.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting further improvements in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rashida Sharif  
Her Majesty's Inspector