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Mrs Wendy James
Headteacher
Murrayfield Community Primary School
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Dear Mrs James

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 2 December 2009, for the information which you provided before and during my visit. My particular thanks to the time that you and your deputy headteacher spent with me, and to those that I met formally: the special educational needs coordinator, the two governors and the local authority adviser.

As a result of the inspection on 25 and 26 November 2008, the school was asked to:

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science further through establishing the more practical curriculum and promoting pupils' attendance.
- Improve teaching so that more is good or better by sharing more extensively the existing good practice within the school.
- Make marking and target setting more consistent and clear so that all pupils know exactly what they have to do to improve.

Two teachers are new to the school since the last inspection and there is a new chair of governors. The single, central record of checks on staff was scrutinised during this inspection and it meets the current government requirements. 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.

Published results for pupils at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 initially present a bleak picture with standards and progress significantly below national figures for several years. However, when examined in more detail it is clear that improvements noted at the time of the last inspection have been securely built upon. Pupils are making better progress than it first appears. It is true that standards at the end of Year 6 in 2009 were too low and that pupils made inadequate progress during their time at the school. However, over the past two years they did make the expected rates of progress and started to make up for lost time. For the first time in five years,



standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 are now in-line with national averages. This follows a steadily upward trend since 2007 and is a result of specifically targeted work with the youngest pupils over that time, particularly in relation to improving reading skills. Previous underachievement in Key Stage 1 has been successfully halted.

In other year groups too, pupils have made greater gains in their learning, with most making expected progress over the last academic year. Older pupils have more learning to make up because of the legacy of underachievement. Current Year 6 pupils are now on track to make sufficient progress from Key Stage 1 in reading and writing but not for mathematics. In addition, the proportion of pupils making the expected two National Curriculum levels is likely to be greater for reading and mathematics than writing, and is too low for those reaching Level 4 in both English and mathematics.

Now that the school has more effective ways of tracking pupils' progress over time, there is a better understanding of the difference between those who are underachieving and those who may have additional learning needs. However, the difference that support programmes make to pupils' achievements is not tracked closely enough, making it difficult to determine those programmes that make the most difference and to which groups of pupils.

The curriculum has continued to evolve since the last inspection. Observations of teaching and pupils' work show a range of different activities to engage pupils more actively in their learning. Pupils say that they enjoy their lessons. Teachers report that the curriculum is more exciting, varied and helps them to link pupils' skills across different lessons.

Rates of pupils' attendance have not improved, remaining stubbornly around 92%, which is well below national averages. Nevertheless, better tracking of attendance has led to more pupils attending school regularly as a result of very clear expectations and consequences for families.

The quality of teaching varies. It is generally satisfactory but some of it is not, and too much inconsistency remains. This is because the quality of pupils' learning varies in direct relation to the effectiveness of teachers' implementation of agreed principles and practices. Marking of pupils' work and the use of targets are examples of this. Where pupils are clear about the success criteria for their work and know how to improve it, they do well but there are times when teachers are not specific enough about what they expect in their written or verbal feedback to pupils. Nevertheless, lessons move at a brisk pace and teachers' plans have improved. Staff are willing and confident to try new things. They are clearer about the levels that pupils should be working at and the amount of progress that they should make in a year.



Senior leaders have their eye on long-term, sustainable development of the school, while not losing sight of the things that need to improve now. They are doing the right things and can prove the difference that their actions are having, for example, on pupils' reading and writing. Better tracking gives staff and governors the information they need to have higher expectations of pupils. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are very clear that not only are all staff accountable for the progress that pupils make by the time they leave Year 6, but also for pupils' long term well-being into adulthood. There is still a lot to be done and the momentum for change must be maintained. Nonetheless, the school is 'standing on its own two feet'. The local authority has given significant support over many years. Although this has made some difference, for example, to the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, their support has not led to sufficiently improved outcomes for all pupils. Currently, they are supporting the school with those aspects identified by the staff, facilitating links with other schools and maintaining a strong monitoring role. Given the school's recent period of accelerated progress and a developing culture of responsibility and ownership, this would appear to be appropriate.

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

Heather Yaxley
Her Majesty's Inspector

