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Mrs Yvonne Daly
Headteacher
Flowery Field Primary School
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Dear Mrs Daly

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 08 December 2009, for the time you gave to our discussions and for the information you provided before and during my visit. As a result of the inspection on 03 and 04 December 2008, the school was asked to:

- improve teachers' expectations of what pupils, particularly the more able, can achieve in English, mathematics and science, in order to raise standards and achievement
- ensure that the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics are practised in other subjects such as history, geography, religious education, science and design and technology
- ensure that senior leaders use all the information available to them to guide school improvement planning and evaluate the success of their plans against the standards achieved by pupils
- ensure that all leaders and managers have clearly defined roles and responsibilities for which they are held accountable and that these are linked to the school's priorities for improvement.

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

Before the last inspection, between 2007 and 2008, standards fell in assessments and national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6. Attainment has since improved. This is clear from the national test results for 2009, the school's detailed assessment

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records and the standards seen in lessons and pupils' work. After starting school with very low prior attainment, children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, as they did at the time of the last inspection. They enter Year 1 with attainment below levels expected for their age. By the end of Year 2 in 2009 assessments showed standards to have risen to slightly below average in English, with good gains in writing, though in mathematics they remained well below average as in 2008. By the end of Year 6 in 2009 standards had risen to a little above average overall in the core subjects, more so in English and science than in mathematics, with higher-attaining pupils doing particularly well in writing. All groups of pupils achieve to broadly the same extent, and some of the older boys do particularly well. The school recognises the need to raise attainment in mathematics to the higher levels of English and science. It is working rigorously to continue to improve provision, and has so far effectively improved the teaching of number. It has the clear capacity to achieve the further improvement needed, through its own efforts and by continuing to make judicious use of advice from external specialists.

In both the infant and junior sections of the school, pupils make steady progress in lessons, especially so in English and science and increasingly so in mathematics. The lessons seen were planned in detail and taught briskly and with very competent classroom management. The teaching seen was good and some had outstanding features. These included the precise use of assessment to help pupils to learn more effectively and to inform the planning of subsequent lessons and interventions for pupils struggling with specific aspects of their work. Teachers have high expectations and the clear capacity to pass on their enthusiasm for learning to their pupils. Pupils' behaviour and motivation are good. Teachers and their assistants work closely in teams to help all pupils to progress well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. Staff were seen insisting that pupils be precise in their use of vocabulary and correcting effectively any sloppy use of language when it arose.

There is appropriate concentration on raising attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Teachers' planning, class timetables, lessons and vibrant displays of pupils' work also show that the curriculum is broad and attracts the interest of pupils well. In the lessons seen in other subjects, staff were careful to use the opportunities provided for pupils to practise basic skills. This was clear, for example, in a design and technology lesson in which the teacher and teaching assistant ensured that pupils measured length accurately and explained orally their ideas on constructing a model vehicle clearly and confidently to the whole class. In this way, the school shows improved effectiveness in enabling pupils to practise their basic skills in literacy and numeracy in subjects throughout the curriculum. Staff are planning to extend such opportunities as they develop the curriculum further in line with current national proposals to do so.

Senior and middle leaders have developed rigorous procedures for using data to guide their planning and evaluating of the school's work. Much effort has been put into this. Staff have made good use of authoritative advice from outside the school

The marking of pupils' work, particularly in English and mathematics, is regular, precise and related to targets for pupils. It is supported by helpful comments which pupils are expected to read and follow. The data gathered from assessment is well used in comprehensive meetings about pupils' progress, closely linked to the school's procedures for staff performance management. This is consistent throughout the school. As a result, teachers and teaching assistants are clear about how well each pupil, and group of pupils, is progressing. They use the information well to plan teaching. The precise assessment information has shown more clearly where pupils are doing well and not so well. This has helped teachers to raise their expectations of pupils and plan to raise attainment. Leaders have similarly sharp insight into the performance of groups and classes and this forms the basis of their good and objective procedures for evaluating the school's performance. Progress has been very good in this use of performance data. The school is now working to spread its good practice in assessment beyond English and mathematics and also to streamline the new practices to ensure that they become firmly embedded in the routine practice of the school.

These and other developments have been strengthened by clarifying the roles of leaders throughout the school. This has sharpened leaders' focus on the tasks assigned to them and encouraged them to be properly accountable for their responsibilities. It has also raised morale among staff and, in encouraging higher levels of innovation and personal initiative, has raised their productivity and sense of achievement. The headteacher has been able successfully to delegate some responsibilities, for example for reducing persistent absence among some pupils. In doing so she has strengthened her capacity to see 'the big picture' and manage the school more strategically. The roles of the deputy headteacher and middle leaders have been similarly refined. Each has authority in the school to carry out the more clearly defined management duties. Class teachers have also become better informed to take responsibility for the learning and progress of pupils.

Much of this good development has been supported strongly by specialists from the local authority. The school has made good use of this expertise. Many parts of its improved practice are now well embedded in its routine work. This supports its strengthened capacity for sustained improvement.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely
Peter Toft
Her Majesty's Inspector