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Miss S Williams
Headteacher
Middleton Primary School
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Dear Miss Williams

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 06 July 2010, for the time you gave to our discussions and for the information you provided before and during my visit.

Since the last inspection there have been several changes to class teachers: five teachers have been appointed to fill the roles of class teachers in Reception and in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6.

As a result of the inspection on 15 and 16 October 2008, the school was asked to raise standards in English, mathematics and science; improve the quality of teaching; and develop the expertise of all leaders to improve the consistency of monitoring and evaluation for all groups of pupils.

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 enter the school with skills significantly below expectations for their age and particularly so in language and early development. The deepening levels of disadvantage provide a significant barrier to raising attainment. Support from the local authority to identify pupils' needs and next steps are helping the school to develop provision and earlier intervention to meet their needs. The proportion of pupils making good levels of progress has improved significantly over the last 12 months. Nonetheless, their attainment remains well below the expectations for their age.



Pupils make at least satisfactory progress across the school with some groups, for example Year 5 pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, making good progress. Pupils have made better progress in mathematics in the last 12 months as a result of intensive support and training from the local authority, partnership with another school and senior leaders' close monitoring and determination to improve this aspect of performance.

Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 fell in 2009 in English, mathematics and science and is significantly low when compared with national averages. A small number of pupils missed their targets. While the long-term absence of their class teacher unsettled some pupils, their own poor attendance also hindered their achievement. The most recent assessments by teachers show a significant increase in attainment in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2. Year 6 pupils are making good progress as a result of consistent teaching and focused intervention and support. Their attainment in mathematics is the best in the school's recent history and attainment in English and science has risen to where it was at the last inspection. All of these pupils met their targets and more pupils achieved Level 5 than previously. Focused support of learning mentors has helped 10 boys to maintain their attendance and one-to-one support with mathematics enabled 14 pupils to make rapid gains in their learning.

The school's own data and tracking information are used effectively to identify pupils who need support. The range of interventions is wide and well aligned to needs in all year groups. Assessment of individual pupils' progress is developing securely in mathematics and English and is at early stages in information and communication technology (ICT), but it does not extend across all subjects for all groups of pupils, which limits the school's secure view of their achievement.

Attendance is below average but improving as a result of the school's further investment in staff to support pupils and their families in tackling this long-standing issue. Some success in tackling persistent absentees has resulted in almost all making small steps to improve their attendance. Goals and targets for individual and class attendance are closely monitored by senior staff and by the pupils themselves. Pupils are keen to achieve 100% attendance and are proud of the improvements they make towards this. Senior leaders are very aware of the need to tackle attendance to make sustained progress in raising standards.

Changes to staffing and the implementation of a programme of extensive training and support are having a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching. Pupils mostly make good progress in lessons as a result of work which is more closely matched to their needs and interests. Learning activities are well chosen to appeal to pupils and often link to visits, for example the factual animal reports Year 1 pupils made following their visit to Tropical World. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the wider range of teaching and learning methods teachers employ and they behave very well in lessons. In one scenario, for example, a teaching assistant and a Year 2 pupil acted out a telephone call to the police as the pupil reported theft of treasure

and provided a detailed and scary description of the villain pirate Jack. Pupils say they enjoy lessons because they are fun, more interesting and challenging. Teachers manage lessons well and good use is made of teaching assistants and support staff. In several lessons teachers modelled mathematical operations and this enabled pupils to understand the concepts. Pupils rise to the increasing challenge; they know their targets and are moving forward confidently in their learning, for example in using percentages, decimals and fractions. Confidence was also demonstrated in pupils' extended responses to the effective questioning by staff. More-able pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to set some challenges for themselves.

Relationships between pupils and staff are good. Pupils say they feel well supported and safe. The school meets requirements for ensuring that appropriate checks are made on staff and visitors to keep pupils safe.

Senior leaders provide a high level of challenge and this is seen in their rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching. Together with support from local authority consultants the school is moving forward in improving subject leadership. Leaders of literacy, numeracy and ICT are becoming more involved in monitoring and getting to grips with data. A consistent emphasis on assessment in the training of class teachers has helped to improve teachers' knowledge and raise their expectations and confidence levels. The school has begun to develop the expertise of all leaders through a major programme of training aligned to their specialist roles. Plans to develop leadership roles further are well advanced. The capacity to improve is increasing and the school has already started to reduce levels of support from the local authority.

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

Yours sincerely

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector