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Mrs T Peacock
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Peacock

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Thursday 12 November 2009 and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils for their friendliness and talking to me about the school and to the Chair of Governors for attending the feedback meeting at short notice.

Since the last inspection the school has dealt with some staff absences and there have been some changes within the governing body. The number on roll has dipped slightly and there are currently two Year 3 classes instead of three.

As a result of the last inspection on 11–12 November 2008, the school was asked to:

- improve pupils' standards in English, particularly for higher-attaining pupils and for boys
- improve the match of work to pupils' needs and provide more opportunities for pupils to work independently
- ensure that the monitoring of teaching leads to a better consistency in the quality of learning
- improve communications between parents and carers, and the school.

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.

The results of the 2009 Key Stage 2 national tests show a similar picture overall when compared with 2008. Within this picture there is a notable improvement in pupils' attainment in English. The performance of boys improved significantly in both reading and writing and a marked success was the percentage reaching the higher Level 5. By contrast, results in mathematics dipped again for the second year running and the percentage of girls reaching the higher Level 5 was disappointing with a sharp fall compared with 2008. Boys' performance in mathematics improved in 2009 when compared with the dip in 2008. In 2009 the school missed its challenging targets for the proportion of pupils making two levels of progress in English and mathematics.

Observations during the inspection and extensive data provided by the school indicate that pupils are making better gains in their learning but the progress between subjects and groups of pupils is uneven across the school. Progress is stronger in reading and writing with some significant gains in some year groups. Progress in mathematics lags a little behind with some underachievement in Year 6 for both boys and girls. The school is aware of this and is taking action through targeted support and intervention. This additional support is welcomed by pupils who commented that this is really helpful in pushing them up to the next level.

The school leaders judge that the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, particularly in the teaching of writing. Observations carried out during the inspection support this view. There are strengths in preparing pupils for their writing activities. These include working as 'talking partners' where pupils talk about their ideas and share them with others, reinforcing basic grammar and punctuation well. Pupils talk enthusiastically about more interesting and relevant activities which motivate them to write. They particularly like the visual learning through the use of information and communication technology which helps stimulate their ideas. In the lessons observed pupils were much more enthusiastic in literacy than in numeracy. Some pupils lacked confidence in the use of mathematical vocabulary and explaining their methods. While there has been improvement in matching work to pupils' needs there are still instances where work set is too easy or too hard and this limits the progress made. For example, where progress was less secure in mathematics, pupils would have benefited from more support and practical aids to help them grasp new ideas. The planning of work in mathematics does not always build securely on pupils' previous learning. Pupils make mature comments about their learning and say that it is now more interactive with increased choices for directing their own learning and opportunities for independent work.

The school has moved quickly to improve communications to parents and carers. There have been improvements to the range and quality of information provided and greater accessibility to teachers at the start and end of the day. A notable success

has been the input of parents' and carers' views into the drawing up and implementation of the new behaviour strategy across the school. Parents and carers are more involved in their children's learning through the recently introduced visual learning platform which is accessible at home.

Since the last inspection there have been some positive developments in the school's capacity for sustained improvement. School self-evaluation is improving. There is now a more systematic approach to monitoring teaching and learning and school improvement planning. Well-focused actions taken to improve outcomes in writing are impacting successfully but senior leaders are aware that the actions required for raising achievement in mathematics are not yet as precisely focused. Systems for tracking pupils' progress and target setting are strengthening further. The school has some detailed analysis of pupils' progress and is making better use of data to identify quicker those pupils who are lagging behind and then taking action to improve outcomes.

The meetings about pupils' progress, introduced this year, have resulted in a greater sharing of assessment information among all class teachers so that they have a better awareness of how well pupils are doing and greater accountability for the progress they make. Middle leaders are having a greater influence on school improvement. Senior leaders know they need to improve pupils' progress in mathematics while at the same time sustaining the momentum of improvements in English in order to raise pupils' overall achievement.

There has been effective use of the local authority Primary Strategy Team consultants and the School Improvement Partner to improve the provision and outcomes in English as well as supporting the middle leaders in developing their leadership and management skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Brenda McIntosh
Additional inspector