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Mrs C Coates
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Coates

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 9 December 2009, for the time you gave to our discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils and staff who also gave up their time to meet with me.

As a result of the inspection on 08 and 09 December 2009, the school was asked to:

- develop the role of the key person in the Early Years Foundation Stage and ensure that the outside area is used fully to enhance learning and development
- make all teaching as good as the best seen by raising expectations and including more challenge in lessons
- implement consistently the good strategies now in place for tracking individuals' progress and sharing targets for improvement with pupils.

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.

The school has responded positively to the issues identified at its inspection in December 2008. The headteacher has a clear understanding of how to move the school forward and, in particular, the progress made by all groups of pupils. Her view is shared and well supported by staff who are tackling the main issues with rigour and determination. Staff's morale is good and together staff are working hard to ensure that the necessary improvements result in better outcomes for pupils.

Standards at both key stages continue to rise. From broadly average starting points pupils leave Year 6 with above average attainment. Standards have been above average over time but in 2009 English results for pupils in Year 6 rose significantly, including the higher proportion of pupils who achieved Level 5. This is because the overall quality of teaching and learning has improved, particularly in English lessons, and the school is more adept at tracking the rate of progress made by all pupils. School data indicate that pupils' attainment in writing is broadly average at the end of Year 2. This compares with their attainment in reading and mathematics where standards in these subjects, in 2009, were significantly above national expectations. Senior leaders have already identified improving the quality of writing as a key priority.

Effective monitoring, for example joint observations, book scrutiny and analysis of pupils' progress, by senior and team leaders is ensuring that there is greater consistency across the school in the way in which lessons are planned and taught. Teachers have benefited from opportunities to moderate samples of work and share good practice with each other. The local authority has supported the school by leading sections of training courses to help teachers understand how to provide more challenge for pupils. School records indicate that feedback to teachers is detailed, provides key points for development and also celebrates strengths in teaching. As a result, pupils report that they understand what they are learning, are able to sustain concentration and work productively. They describe learning as 'fun' and are able to challenge themselves by attempting more and more difficult work in lessons.

Senior leaders have introduced a comprehensive tracking system to monitor the progress made by different groups of pupils. Training has been undertaken so that teachers know how to interrogate the information and use it successfully to set appropriate targets for pupils. Close monitoring ensures that any pupils who are underachieving are promptly given the support they need. Marking and the assessment of pupils' work is more consistent across the school and, as a result, pupils have a better understanding of what they need to do to improve. Marking is carried out regularly and generally identifies what pupils have done well. However, although some evidence was seen, comments in pupils' books do not always identify the next steps pupils need to take in order to reach the higher levels. Pupils themselves confirmed this. A small amount of work is unfinished, but the vast majority of pupils' work is neat and well presented. There are appropriate opportunities in lessons for pupils to become involved in discussing and assessing their own or others' work. Target books for literacy, mathematics and social skills have recently been introduced. These give pupils the chance, with the teachers' guidance, to set targets for themselves. Pupils describe their pride when these are achieved and when they are able to understand a particular concept, for example knowing their times tables or using punctuation marks correctly.

The role of the key person in the Early Years Foundation Stage is clearly established. Children know who their key person is and understand that the 'leaf system' enables staff to share special moments and information about their work each week with their parents and carers. This arrangement is welcomed by parents and carers who, in turn, are able to share key pieces of home news with the staff. The outside area is used to best effect, despite limitations in size, with staff regularly moving different equipment outside for children to use. Senior leaders recognise that the area is small and therefore restricts the variety of activities that can be undertaken at any one time, especially when large equipment is being used. The school, together with the local authority, is actively pursuing plans to install a canopy so that the outside area can be used more frequently, even when the weather is inclement.

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

Yours sincerely

Marianne Young
Her Majesty's Inspector

