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Mrs. A. Charlton
Hob Moor Community Primary School
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Dear Mrs Charlton,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I made an unannounced visit to inspect your school on 10 December 2009, and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to the chair of governors, the local authority (LA) representatives, staff and the group of pupils who gave up some of their lunchtime to meet with me.

There have been some changes to the school's context since the previous inspection in December 2008. The school is now part of a hard federation with a special school with which it shares the building and all of the facilities; there is one governing body for both schools. There is one Federation Principle with overall responsibility for both schools with a recently appointed head of school at Hob Moor Primary School. There has been a significant amount of staff change and this includes the appointment of two new teachers and an inclusion manager.

As a result of the inspection in December 2008, the school was asked to:

- Raise standards throughout the school, particularly for more able pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching, especially by ensuring that lessons move at a quicker pace, so that pupils concentrate fully and learning is consistently good.
- Increase the learning opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage through greater use of assessment and better structuring of planned activities.

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 most significant achievement at the school in the past year has been to improve attainment at the end of Key Stage 1. The 2009 unvalidated results show that attainment at Key Stage 1 was better than in 2008 and was broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. Improvement at Key Stage 2 has been more limited; performance in English, mathematics and science declined compared to the previous year and was particularly low in English. The 2009 results were well below the Government's floor targets in English but were close to, but still below the floor target in mathematics. The proportions of pupils attaining at Level 5 were very low compared to average and overall this group of pupils did not make enough progress over their time in Key Stage 2. At both Key Stages the attainment of boys in reading and writing lagged significantly behind that of girls.

The school's own data and tracking indicates that pupils across the school are making better progress and that pupils currently in Years 6 are on track to achieve better results in the end of Key Stage assessments in 2010. Pupils are making better progress where teaching is more engaging and meaningful. This was clearly seen in one lesson where pupils were motivated and engaged to write poems describing the flame on a candle. The small amount of teaching sampled during the inspection confirmed that teaching is improving and generally meets pupils' learning needs. The supportive approach of teachers and good relationships are strengths in almost all lessons and, consequently, pupils generally behave well and cooperate with one another. The pace of learning in the observed lessons was generally brisk and this helps to engage and motivate pupils. The deployment and work of teaching assistants was a positive feature of most lessons.

Assessments for learning strategies are improving. Pupils are routinely told the purpose of tasks; the learning intentions and success criteria. Pupils say that this is helping them to 'have a target for each lesson'. Marking is improving and identifies what pupils have done well and what they need to do to improve next, but this remains inconsistent. The quality of work across the school is variable, particularly handwriting and presentation. More effective systems to check and track pupils' attainment and progress have been developed and assessments are becoming more robust.

The work of the Early Years Foundation Stage has developed well since the previous inspection. Planned activities are varied and interesting. There is a suitable range of adult lead activities and those where children are free to choose what they do. Opportunities for children to write are being developed well, for example, self-registration when they are having fruit or recording the results of their 'races' are beginning to interest boys more. Pupils' learning and playing are assessed appropriately and these assessments are routinely shared with parents in the 'busy books'. Although some good adult interaction and questioning was observed there remains some variability in this area. On some occasions adults are apt to limit their discussions with children to direct questions which require only brief answers.

The management of the federation and its day-to-day working has become established with some good inter-school working practices developing. For example

there is a system of having paired classes from both schools given opportunities to work together. Planning for improvement is good and correctly identifies both short term and longer term developments. The local authority and governors have a high level of confidence in the Federation Principle and are supportive of the changes being made. The school engages effectively with the local authority, which has provided good support to establish the federation and is aware of the need to continue to provide support to build further capacity for sustained improvement.

Although improvements have not yet led to improved attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 the largely accurate self-evaluation and secure systems that are now in place along with the continued support of the local authority, means that the school is well placed to bring about further improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Amraz Ali
Her Majesty's Inspector