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Mr Kieran Quigley
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Quigley

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 2 October 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils I talked to, the chair of governors, the school improvement partner and the local authority advisers.

The number of staff has been reduced since the previous inspection and the school no longer has a deputy headteacher. Several teachers have changed year groups.

As a result of the inspection on 1 April 2008, the school was asked to raise standards for all pupils and improve achievement in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2. It was also asked to monitor more closely the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in those classes where progress is too slow, and to use assessment information more effectively to set individual pupils targets.

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

Since the previous inspection standards have fallen at the end of Key Stage 2. Although mathematics standards have remained steady, there has been a downward trend in English. In science, standards are significantly below average. The school has identified some of these weaknesses and has introduced a new curriculum for

English but it has not had enough impact on older pupils' work. The analysis of performance in science has not been rigorous enough to address the weaknesses in provision or to raise the low standards. The previous inspection identified slower progress in the early stages of Key Stage 2 but reported that progress accelerated in Year 6. The school has been successful in increasing the rate of progress in the younger classes but it is now slower for the older pupils. Staff working in the early stages of Key Stage 2 have a lively teaching style, which engages pupils' interests and accelerates their learning. There are also some high quality sessions at the end of lessons, where staff support pupils very effectively in identifying what they have learnt and what will be the next steps in their learning. The strategy of reducing teaching group sizes is also working well, particularly through the involvement of teaching assistants. The key weaknesses in provision for the oldest pupils are low expectations and a slow pace in the teaching. Planning for these pupils does not consistently identify how the more able will be challenged, either in whole class sessions or in their group work. The curriculum does not provide enough time for science in Year 6.

The school has made some improvements in the Foundation Stage provision which have led to improved achievement. The outdoor learning area has been extended and provides a wide variety of opportunities for learning but staff do not use it often enough. There are some interesting activities which children thoroughly enjoy, such as investigating patterns in shaving foam. In contrast, whole group sessions are too long and children lose interest in the tasks. Opportunities are missed for children to make choices and to carry out independent learning. This is having a negative impact on children's personal development and on their speaking skills.

The monitoring of teaching and learning is not effective enough and reduces the school's capacity to improve further, despite the increase in the involvement of governors in the monitoring process. Although leaders have received training to develop these skills, they do not use them to analyse strengths and weakness effectively. There is not enough scrutiny of pupils' work or teachers' planning to ensure there is consistency and continuity of learning between classes. For example, the senior team were unaware that some pupils had not received any science lessons this term despite there being a weekly timetabled slot for a full afternoon of science work. The analysis of assessments such as optional national tests for pupils in Years 3 to 5 does not identify clearly enough what needs to be taught more effectively the following year. All of these weaknesses have resulted in a wide variety in the quality of teaching, which ranges between year groups from outstanding to inadequate. Consequently, the quality of pupils' learning varies unacceptably.

The school has introduced a target setting system in all classes but teachers do not use this consistently well in lessons. The individual targets are written in an appropriate style for pupils to understand but some pupils think that their targets are too easy and several pupils are unable to recall what they need to do to improve.

The local authority and the school improvement partner have worked hard to provide support for the school, including additional training to meet its particular needs.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Maggi Shepherd

Margaret Shepherd
Additional Inspector