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5 July 2010

Mrs T Lewis  
Downderry Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Lewis

### Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 24 June 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please extend my thanks to the pupils and to the Chair and member of the governing body, as well as the representative from the local authority, who gave time to speak to me.

As a result of the inspection on 30 June 2008, the school was asked to:

- improve teaching to ensure consistently higher expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially of the boys and in reading and writing
- ensure more consistent assessment, marking and target setting across the school to give pupils more information on how to improve and help teachers to plan the next steps in learning
- strengthen the role of subject leaders in English, mathematics and science so that they focus their work more clearly on what pupils should be learning and achieving.

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

Inspection and school evidence points to children's knowledge and skills on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage being well below age-related expectations. Overall, in 2009, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 results demonstrate that pupils attained standards that are well below national expectations. However, there is a clear trend of improvement. Standards seen in lessons, school data and pupils' books indicate



rapid improvements in standards. The majority of pupils are now making good progress. There are clear indications in pupils' workbooks that they are beginning to build systematically on what they already know and are able to do, and to make up for earlier underachievement. This is particularly the case in Year 6, where lesson observations, the pupils' work and the school's records show that attainment is rising to the level that it should be. The support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is also effective, and means that these pupils making good progress. These pupils are often set tasks that are well matched to their needs, and they are securely supported to achieve their targets.

Progress is improving because robust monitoring by senior leaders and steps to strengthen the quality of teaching have ensured that the majority of lessons are good and are rapidly accelerating the rate of progress. Expectations of what pupils, particularly the more able, can achieve are high. Teachers' explanations are clear, and time in lessons is used to the full. Classrooms provide the pupils with stimulating and well-organised conditions for learning. Additionally, the curriculum has a rigorous focus on literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils have sufficient opportunities to write in a range of contexts and to carry out investigations in mathematics and science.

Through half-termly meetings to discuss the progress of their pupils, the teachers have a much clearer picture of what pupils already know and are able to do. Teachers' secure subject knowledge and good knowledge of the pupils ensures they plan well for all levels of ability and so pupils make good progress. Lessons are regularly characterised by high expectations of pupils' academic achievement and personal development, which manifest themselves in challenging questions, the use of strategies to engage all pupils in learning at all times and ongoing assessment of how well they are doing, often involving the pupils themselves. Teachers link subjects together to make them more meaningful for pupils. They engage pupils fully in active learning and tailor the work carefully to meet pupils' particular needs. They are able to do this because they keep track of how well pupils have understood each stage of learning. The input of other teachers and teaching assistants to pupils' learning, whether in class or group work, makes an important contribution to the good progress made by those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or who speak English as an additional language. Where teaching is on occasion less successful it is because introductions are too long, so pupils are not fully engaged and do not get down to their work as quickly as they should and there is not the same degree of challenge or pace. As a result, progress in these lessons is not as good as it could be. Pupils achieve well against their individual targets, which are specific, challenging and regularly reviewed. The quality of marking is good; the majority is regular and encouraging, providing pupils with sufficient guidance on how to improve.

The headteacher and senior leaders have successfully built up a self-critical community of caring professionals who work extremely hard for the benefit of the pupils. The headteacher is very committed to doing the very best for the pupils, and



all members of staff at every level share her aspiration for pupils to enjoy their learning and to achieve their potential. Increasingly, middle leaders play a key role in leading aspects of improvement. They are actively involved in monitoring, reviewing and planning for improvement. There are very good systems in place for tracking pupils' progress, and for monitoring the performance of teachers. Governors are fully involved in the life of the school; they share a clear vision for its future success. Through regular visits to the school, governors focus on specific areas of the curriculum and ensure there is a critical friend approach within the school. Resources, accommodation and staffing are used extremely well to the benefit of all pupils. The systems for self-evaluation give the senior leaders and governors constantly updated and accurate information about the school's strengths and weaknesses. The senior leaders and governors make effective use of this information for planning for the future, and for ensuring that staff development activities are relevant to the school's priorities.

Procedures to ensure the safety of pupils meet government guidelines. There are, for example, good procedures for ensuring the safeguarding of pupils through the checks made on all adults who work in the school. Capacity to improve is outstanding as demonstrated by the rising standards and the high-quality provision that has been built up since the last inspection.

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

Kekshan Salaria  
Her Majesty's Inspector

