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Mr Paul Thomas
The Headteacher
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Dear Mr Thomas

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 7 May 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to staff and pupils who met with me, and to the governor who attended the feedback meeting.

Since the inspection, three teachers have left and been replaced. The number of pupils on roll has fallen as a result of the local authority's housing regeneration programme which has seen families move out of the area. Some classes are small, especially at the end of Key Stage 2.

As a result of the inspection on 14 May 2008, the school was asked to:

- accelerate pupils' progress and raise the standards they attain by ensuring that teaching and learning are consistently good
- ensure all leaders are systematically involved in monitoring the quality of provision
- use marking and target setting consistently to make clear to pupils what the next steps are in their learning.

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.

Pupils' attainment is rising. Attainment is low at the end of Key Stage 1 but is close to average by the end of Key Stage 2. Currently, Year 6 pupils are on track to meet targets that are close to the national figures for previous years. Close analysis of the school's comprehensive data gives leaders a clear picture of pupils' attainment and progress. Data show that there are still some variations between subjects and year groups. Weaknesses in writing hold back attainment in English. Data also show that,



while some year groups make accelerated progress, pupils do not yet make consistently good progress over time. Progress gained in one year is not always built on in the following year due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.

Brief visits to a number of lessons during my visit confirmed the school's view of teaching quality. The headteacher's analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in lessons observed together was accurate. A consistent and successful feature was the use of talk partners so that pupils share ideas and rehearse what they want to write. Good modelling of the writing process helped pupils to understand how to improve their writing through editing. Pupils are aware of their own learning and, frequently, are involved in assessing how well they have achieved the objectives of lessons. They know their targets and the levels at which they are working. Generally, pupils are engaged effectively in their learning, are enthusiastic, and proud of their work. Weaker aspects of lessons included: missed opportunities to develop pupils' independence because tasks were too directed; teaching assistants not always deployed effectively during whole-class teaching; too much talk from teachers; and, a lack of challenge in the pace and pitch of pupils' work.

Pupils' books show a systematic focus on teaching writing skills and the structures of writing. Pupils are learning about the features of writing and are encouraged to use adventurous vocabulary. The quality of handwriting and presentation is recognised as an area for improvement that needs to be underpinned by a consistent model from staff. The wide range of writing experiences seen in literacy books is not reflected consistently in opportunities across the curriculum. Marking and target setting in English and mathematics have improved. Training in effective marking has been successful, in the main. Some marking and feedback to pupils about their writing is exemplary; it is individualised and sharply focused on what to improve. Importantly, pupils have time to respond to the comments. The marking of pupils' work beyond English and mathematics is inconsistent in quality and frequency.

The leadership roles of senior and middle leaders are developing well. Almost all teachers have had, or will have, training for a leadership role to help build the school's capacity for continued improvement. Working together in teams to, for example, moderate pupils' writing is helping to raise expectations of what pupils should achieve. Staff are beginning to share good practice more widely. This collegiate approach is, reportedly, supportive and leads to good morale. All teachers have an increased role in monitoring through observing their peers. Common weaknesses in teaching are tackled through whole-school training. Individual issues are supported through coaching from colleagues and local authority consultants. Successful support from the local authority can also be seen in the development of outdoor learning experiences for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, observations of teaching are not sharply focused on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. Areas for improvement in teaching are not as precise as they need to be to raise the quality to the next level.

Self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders are clear about what remains to be improved for the school to be judged good at its next inspection. Plans are appropriate and aimed at the right areas. However, plans are not always clear about the expected impact of actions. Completed actions are not evaluated rigorously to show their impact on outcomes for pupils. The school involves parents successfully in supporting their children's learning. Staff provide a range of workshops and family learning events that give parents helpful ideas about how to support learning at home.

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

Jane Wotherspoon
Her Majesty's Inspector