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Mrs Linda Phillips  
Headteacher  
Falconbrook Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Phillips

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 9 June 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, staff and governors who met with me.

Since the last inspection on 19–20 June 2008 staffing has stabilised with fewer teachers joining or leaving than had been the case previously. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language has risen further and now constitutes over eight in ten pupils.

As a result of the inspection the school was asked to: improve pupils' progress by providing work matched more closely to their needs, notably those of more able pupils; involve pupils more in assessing their own progress and ensure that marking securely guides them toward the next steps in learning.

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 pupils' achievement has improved sharply since the last inspection. Attainment, as measured by last year's end-of-key-stage assessments of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils, showed marked improvement because of the good impact of the school's



work to boost their progress. While a lower proportion of Year 2 pupils than seen nationally reached the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics, results were up on the previous year. Results achieved by Year 6 pupils in English, mathematics and science tests were also up sharply on the previous year's performance. Attainment in English and science was in line with the national average and in mathematics it was above average. These results represented good overall progress from pupils' low starting points but outstanding progress in mathematics, where provision is now particularly strong. Current pupils are building further on these improvements as good or better progress is becoming more embedded. Progress in lessons is regularly good with increasing evidence of outstanding progress. The overwhelming majority of pupils enjoy school. Their behaviour and attitudes are outstanding and they make a very positive contribution to their own learning.

Greater account is taken of pupils' varying attainment and the support they require to reach challenging targets. Work is more regularly provided at different levels in lessons, notably for higher ability pupils. This is most evident during group-work activities where pupils may undertake different work or receive different support from an adult. Lessons are exciting and include a good range of activities which sustain pupils' enthusiasm. There are regular opportunities for discussion. These are used well to promote pupils' thinking and to develop their language skills, including the many for whom English is a second language. However, some opportunities are missed to adjust questioning in order to challenge pupils of differing ability, particularly when setting up activities early in lessons. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to group work but are sometimes underemployed during whole-class teaching. The curriculum has been developed further to include more activities to broaden pupils' experience of the world, such as a recent visit to Lewes Castle.

Effective steps to engage pupils more in assessing their own work mean that as they get older they have a clearer understanding of what they should be achieving and how to move their work forward. Year 6 pupils, for example, spoke confidently about their individual targets. Many lessons include opportunities for reflection and planning the next steps in learning. Marking has improved considerably in English and mathematics. Pupils have noticed how much time and effort is now put into this by teachers. Most marking provides clear guidance for improvement and teachers ensure that pupils read it, respond and revisit work where required. Marking in other subjects is less well developed. Better tracking of pupils' progress over time is supporting well-targeted intervention where underachievement is identified. Pupils speak highly of small-group and/or individual tuition when they need extra help with, for example, developing English language skills. Teachers' assessment of pupils' progress during lessons is good overall but sometimes too few questions are asked to check their understanding before they move on to the next stage of learning.

School leaders are making a greater impact on the quality of provision and pupils' achievement. Considerable staff turnover leading up to the last inspection meant that a significant number of leaders were new to their roles and not fully involved in

developing their areas of responsibility. This is no longer the case and the leadership team is working more confidently together in moving the school forward. A much wider range of staff, including subject leaders, is involved in monitoring teaching and the progress made by pupils. Professional development for leaders has been effective in developing their expertise. Robust action has been taken to tackle less effective teaching. Better use is made of assessment information to set challenging goals for the school and ensure pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Leaders have a clear understanding of the areas requiring improvement. These are enshrined in strategic development plans which set out most of the next steps in logical sequence. However, it is not always clear how progress toward long-term goals will be measured. The governors have improved the extent to which they monitor and challenge the school. Notably, they make greater reference to pupils' achievement when evaluating the quality of the school's provision.

The school coordinates its work well with external partners, making good use of support from the local authority to help the pupils and their families. Effective work with the School Improvement Partner has increased the impact of leadership through fostering better self-evaluation and strategic planning. The school is proactive in seeking support from outside sources such as funding from a bank for the development of a computer learning zone and a charitable foundation to support volunteer readers.

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

Stephen Long  
Her Majesty's Inspector