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Ms Linda Mulley
The Headteacher
Belvedere Infant School
Mitchell Close
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Dear Ms Mulley

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 5 May 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. In particular, please thank your senior management team and pupils for their welcome.

The school serves a community which is ever changing. Since the last inspection there has been an increase in the number of Black African families, many of whom have recently arrived in this country. The school continues to take a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Following the last inspection, there were some staffing difficulties and a relatively high turnover of staff. The headteacher has reorganised the leadership team. The former deputy headteacher retired but continues to work in the school on a part-time basis as the inclusion manager. The school has a relatively new deputy headteacher. In December 2009, the mathematics leader left the school and the former science leader took on this post. The school then appointed a new science and technology leader.

As a result of the inspection on 9 May 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in reading, mathematics and science
- ensure that the developments in tracking pupils' progress are helpful to teachers in pinpointing pupils' next steps in learning and that information is used to rigorously evaluate the progress of different groups to raise standards
- pursue further ways to improve attendance.



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.

Since the last inspection, the school has maintained a caring ethos and very good relationships with pupils. Staff continue to ensure that pupils behave well. These features, together with a steadily improving curriculum, underpin pupils' keenness to learn, their gradually accelerating academic progress and overall enjoyment of school. The quality of teaching, attainment and progress is steadily improving in reading but there is more to do in mathematics.

In June 2008, attainment was considerably below average in reading, writing and mathematics. This was at odds with the findings of the inspection in May of the same year when attainment was found to be average overall. Attainment rose well in 2009 in reading and writing but remained lower than average overall due to low attainment in mathematics.

Attainment for the current Year 2 shows that the school has maintained the improving trend in reading and has further improved writing. Improvements are a direct result of the school's focus on helping pupils to speak more about what they are doing. Overall, they are developing more ideas and descriptive vocabulary for their writing. The improved teaching of phonics and the 'Talk for Writing' project with increased drama, together with the 'Reading Recovery' programme, are successfully helping more pupils to make good progress.

The pace of improvement in mathematics continues to be an important focus for school improvement. The work in books shows that pupils are doing plenty of sums but they could, and should, be doing better in widening their skills. In particular, pupils are not doing enough activities that promote their independent thinking and problem solving skills. From the lessons seen, teachers are beginning to do more of this, but these lessons showed that:

- teachers do not give pupils sufficient time to do practical investigation activities in lessons
- there is insufficient flexibility in teachers' daily lesson planning for teachers to go back over work so that pupils consolidate and develop their skills in a secure and progressive way
- sometimes, teachers are not providing suitable resources to enable pupils to investigate things independently and then explain and record their findings in their own way.



Leaders have a clear and satisfactory plan of action and capacity to improve mathematics. For example, a quarter of pupils are on track and targeted to gain the higher Level 3 skills, which is a great increase when compared with 2009 and 2008. However, leaders' monitoring of learning, including the way leaders evaluate pupils' work in books, lacks a sharp focus. As a result, evaluations of learning are too general. This means that there are missed opportunities to help teachers to improve their teaching to very best effect. Despite this, links with consultants from the local authority are playing an important part in helping to improve teaching, learning, attainment and progress by providing demonstration lessons.

Pupils' attainment and progress in science are on track to improve well this year. This is a result of a clear plan of action to widen investigation opportunities, especially through outside learning. During the inspection this was very evident as pupils delighted in finding out and talking about mini beasts.

The school has improved assessment procedures well, so that all staff are now more responsible for pupils' progress. They readily indentify pupils who need extra support to accelerate their progress. Teachers and leaders now know and understand more about how well pupils are making progress as they move through the school, which helps them to plan for the particular needs of individuals and groups.

Attendance is rising gradually from an exceptionally low level in 2008. This is aided by the appointment of a Learning Mentor and the 'Achievement for All' project. As a result, there are fewer pupils who are persistently poor attenders and parents have an increasing understanding of why it is important for their children not to miss school. Pupils are excited by receiving attendance certificates. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve attendance overall, but this is hampered by infant illnesses. Religious observance can also impact on rates of attendance.

The school's satisfactory capacity to improve is aided by good links with the local authority.

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

Wendy Simmons
Additional Inspector

