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Mrs S Carter  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Carter

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 26 January 2010, for the time you gave to our preliminary discussions and for the information which you provided during my visit.

Since the last inspection, the school has experienced significant disruption in its staffing, some of it at management level. Currently, three of the classes are taught by temporary staff. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2009.

As a result of the inspection on 29–30 January 2008, the school was asked to:

- better match work in lessons to pupils' different capabilities, particularly for the more able pupils in the junior classes
- ensure that pupils' progress in the junior classes is compared not just with the previous year's but also with pupils' Year 2 scores, and that each pupil is set targets that drive them to achieve their full potential.

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.



When they begin school, children's skills and understanding are often well below those that are typical for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. They continue to make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, although pupils' attainment at the age of seven reflects their low starting points. Pupils' attainment has been significantly below average overall for pupils leaving in Year 6 in each of the last three years and some pupils did not make enough progress in 2007 and 2008. However, in 2009, pupils' progress in mathematics and English was much improved. They did particularly well in writing, with significant numbers reaching the higher level.

School data and observations confirm that pupils' attainment is improving and that many make good progress in English and mathematics. Pupils are well behaved in lessons, enjoy their learning and strive to do their best. They respond well to their teachers and cooperate effectively in pairs and in groups. They are keen to contribute their ideas but do not always articulate them clearly. Pupils with a range of learning difficulties and or/disabilities become confident learners and make as much progress as their peers because of the good support they receive. Good links with other aspects of the curriculum help pupils to see the relevance of their learning. For example, in Year 6, pupils were highly motivated when writing a story based around the theme of 'Going for Gold' in the local community. This stimulated some thoughtful discussion about the needs of the neighbourhood and gave the pupils creative ideas upon which to base their writing.

Much of the teaching seen during the visit was of good quality. Teachers generally have high expectations of their pupils and manage their classes well. They are becoming increasingly confident in assessing pupils' progress, and strategies such as the 'Steps to Success' help pupils to be clear about what they are learning and to know if they have been successful. Mostly, teachers plan well to meet the wide variety of needs in their classes and they identify specific challenges for the most able pupils. This is raising expectations of these pupils although there are still occasions when some find the work set relatively undemanding. The school provides an increasing range of strategies to boost the progress of pupils who are in danger of underachieving in literacy and numeracy. Leaders recognise that pupils are not doing as well as they might in science, particularly the more able. Science has not been a focus in recent years and leaders have identified the need to develop pupils' investigative skills in order to boost their attainment. This work remains at an early stage.

The headteacher ensures that the school continues to look after its pupils very well and that it provides a warm and welcoming environment for learning. Efforts to raise attainment and address the issues from the last inspection have been hampered by the high turnover of staff and a number of long-term absences. However, the good support of the local authority and the appointment of a new deputy headteacher have considerably strengthened the capacity of senior leaders to drive improvements. They have set challenging targets based on a secure understanding



of the school's strengths and weaknesses. High expectations are evident in the rigorous monitoring of teaching and the sharper use of data to hold teachers to account for the progress of their pupils. The effectiveness of middle leadership has been hampered by staff changes but the new strategy of creating teams to lead in key areas is proving beneficial although it is at a fairly early stage of development.

The local authority has provided very good support to the school. Recognising the difficulties caused by staff turbulence at leadership level it has provided effective support to help school leaders to adopt a more strategic approach and to maintain the rigour and regularity of monitoring. Consultants have supported individual teachers with some success, which has contributed to the improvements in teaching.

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

Graham Lee  
Additional Inspector

