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Thursday 11 March 2010

Mrs Julie Berrow
Headteacher
Brookfields Primary School
2 Hingeston Street
Hockley
B18 6PU

Dear Mrs Berrow

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Wednesday 10 March 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, especially to those I met including your acting headteacher, staff and pupils.

Since the last inspection in your role as a local leader in education, you have been on secondment to another school as acting head teacher for two terms. An acting head teacher and two acting deputy head teachers are in place until Easter.

As a result of the inspection on 11 March 2008, the school was asked to ensure that all management tasks have a much sharper focus on measurable outcomes that are linked to raising standards; ensure that marking gives pupils clear feedback that shows them what they need to do to improve; and improve the rate of progress and raise standards in writing.

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.

When pupils join the school they are well below the expected level of attainment for their age. In the most recent tests and assessments, they have achieved standards that are broadly average at the end of Key Stage 2 and below average at the end of

Key Stage 1. In work seen in lessons, standards are low in Years 5 and 6. The Key Stage 1 results for these two cohorts were exceptionally low. Whilst Year 5 and 6 pupils are now making more rapid progress than they did in previous years, they still have a long way to go to reach the standards expected for their ages. Nevertheless, in lessons seen throughout the school, pupils were making good progress because of consistently good teaching.

You and your senior managers and leaders have made literacy and, in particular, writing a major priority for the school. You monitor teaching rigorously and, as a result, previously inadequate teaching has been identified and addressed. The introduction of mixed-age teaching groups in Key Stage 2 is supporting pupils' learning effectively but was introduced very recently and is yet to impact on standards of older pupils. Most teaching assistants are deployed well in targeted action groups for those pupils not making the expected progress. A systematic programme of letters and sounds is in place for younger pupils but you have recognised, through close tracking of pupils' progress, that not all have responded to this and you have not been afraid to employ other programmes which have motivated them.

Pupils respond well to the increased number of trips and clubs which have successfully engaged them in their writing. You have established a learning environment in classrooms that is conducive to learning and where, despite the many challenges pupils face, expectations are high and relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Pupils have been given a wider range of enjoyable writing opportunities in their learning that engage them because they are encouraged to work independently through making choices and writing creatively. There are good links, particularly in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, between speaking and writing, and reading and writing. Written tasks are for a real purpose.

Most marking informs pupils what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils are now given time to respond to teachers' comments. At times, marking is limited to ticks and brief praise comments. Teachers work well with each other to check each other's marking and that that they are assessing pupils' work at the appropriate level. Learning objectives are made clear to pupils, although pupils are not always sure at the end of the lesson whether they have achieved them. Older pupils are beginning to get involved in assessing their own and other's work but this is at an early stage of development. Teachers share with pupils information about each level of attainment so that pupils can measure their progress. At its best, this is written in language accessible to the pupils. Teachers use questioning effectively to check whether pupils have understood the work. However, they are sometimes too reliant on accepting answers from volunteers rather than challenging others to answer.

You have worked well in partnership with the local authority to support a local school through your secondment. This, in turn, has enabled other members of your senior team to take on additional responsibilities. They have thrived in this, demonstrating

the school has the capacity to make further improvements. Safeguarding arrangements are extensive to ensure that all staff, governors, visitors and volunteers are routinely checked.

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

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector