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Mr Herriotts
Skills School
Gorcott Hill
Redditch
Worcestershire
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Dear Mr Herriotts

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Tuesday 27 April 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please will you thank your staff and pupils who gave of their time so willingly to help me gather information?

As a result of the inspection on 2 July 2008, the school was asked to:

- Raise standards, particularly in English and mathematics, by ensuring that work meets the varying abilities of pupils in all classes
- Share best practice to improve the quality of teaching
- Improve the accuracy of assessment data and its use in tracking pupils' progress

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made good progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

There have been no significant changes to the school's context since the last inspection. The progress pupils make has improved and is now securely good in English and mathematics. This good rate of progress is evident for all pupils regardless of learning difficulty, ethnic background or ability. The majority of are now making progress which is at least similar to the progress made by their mainstream peers and a small minority gain a complete national curriculum level in 12 months, which is exceptional. For this reason levels of attainment are rising, although they remain below average due to the nature of pupils' learning difficulties, their previously disrupted education and the short amount of time the majority spend at this school.



This increase in progress and attainment, is largely due to improvements in the quality of teaching. Work is now much better suited to the different abilities of pupils in each class. More accurate assessment and well defined individual targets have supported this work and ensured that pupils are more motivated in lessons. In addition the sharing of best practice, especially a more creative curriculum and an increased use of drama in lessons has helped inspire pupils to want to do well. All lessons observed during the visit were good or better with sustained involvement and engagement of pupils in their work. Significantly, most pupils are now playing a much more active part in lessons. In one lesson for example, pupils concentrated thoughtfully to develop questions which they used to quiz a story 'character' played by the teacher. This brought their understanding to life. They regularly help each other, showing care and concern for each others' well-being. These positive attitudes to learning and helpful behaviour also support pupils' good overall achievement.

Senior leadership has been successful in introducing a more rigorous system for using assessment information to monitor pupils' progress and pinpoint where whole school improvement is most needed. This work has been shared very effectively with all staff, who work closely together as a team. This improved use of data, alongside new roles for senior leadership, has raised expectations and secured a clearer focus throughout the school on driving school improvement. Challenging targets are regularly being met. The already good capacity to improve has been further strengthened by this work. The previously good provision and high quality residential care are sustained and continue to support pupils' strong personal development and well-being. A lot has been achieved in terms of improving systems, but much is still at an early stage of development. For example the analysis of progress over time for different groups and comparisons with other similar schools are still being embedded. There is evidence to show that the school is now able to use this information in more precise ways for raising attainment further.

Senior leaders are working closely with other agencies in developing staff skills and are effectively supported by the school improvement partner in securing improvement. Governors are now more involved in the work of the school, providing more challenge. The school's ambition to provide the very best for pupils is constantly evolving and increasingly effective.

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

Patricia Potheary
Additional Inspector

