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Mrs Karen Skoro
 Whitmore Park Primary School
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Dear Mrs Skoro

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I and my colleague, Susan Gregory HMI inspected your school on 10 February 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during my visit.

As a result of the inspection on 28 February 2008 the school was asked to: improve teaching and the mathematics curriculum, and involve subject leaders in checking its work. Since then, the school has seen significant changes to staffing. A new leadership team has been in place since September 2009.

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 declined after the last inspection. The 2009 Key Stage 2 results show that attainment in English rose to average levels and returned to where it was at the last inspection. Attainment in science dipped again, and did not improve significantly in mathematics, resulting in below-average scores. Current attainment in Year 6, as seen during the visit and from the schools' data remains below average. However, there are convincing signs that the leadership team is addressing the fall in attainment robustly.

The school's satisfactory capacity to improve stems from the new leadership team demonstrating a concerted effort to develop aspects of teaching and eradicate inadequate practice. It has a very good understanding of where there is underachievement in the school. Indeed, during the visit the headteacher and deputy headteacher accompanied the inspectors to lessons. The leaders made astute observations and accurate judgements. Since the last inspection, senior managers and subject leaders now check the teachers' planning of work, pupils'



books, assessment data, and visit lessons regularly. The next challenges are to make sure that their observations relate to pupils' learning, and to target support to areas of the school where it is most needed.

The school development plan is a detailed document which rightly focuses on raising standards. It is clear that there has been an emphasis on developing skills in teaching English and mathematics because English results improved and inspectors saw strong teaching of calculation and quick recall, although this is not consistent across the school. The school uses its assessment data more effectively to pin-point where there is underachievement. The recently appointed assistant headteacher has a good overview of the information, and it is used well in regular progress meetings with class teachers. This process leads to target-setting which is effectively rooted in accurate information about individual pupils. However, quantifiable success criteria to articulate the school's ambitions are not always stated clearly in improvement plans.

The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress and reach standards that are fairly typical of young children; similarly, the work seen in pupils' books in Year 6 shows that they also make good progress. However, the progress made in other areas of the school is uneven. The national and schools' progress measures and the practice seen in lessons show that there are pockets of underachievement, especially in mathematics.

The quality of teaching and learning seen during the monitoring inspection was also inconsistent. Strong teaching was seen in the Nursery and in Year 6. The Year 6 pupils also noted that they now feel positive about mathematics teaching and how they are helped to improve. The teaching seen in the rest of the school is not yet strong enough to address the legacy of underachievement. Lessons are characterised by pupils showing interest in their work, behaving well and working cooperatively in pairs and groups. The school is a calm and orderly environment, and a happy place to be. Lessons are prepared in detail and good relationships between adults and pupils are evident. Too often though, activities are too easy or too hard and pupils are occupied with tasks that do not enhance learning, such as cutting and sticking. More could be expected, for example Year 4 pupils were seen doing similar work in mathematics to that of Year 3.

The well-being of pupils continues to be at the heart of the work of the school. Joint working with other agencies has improved and, therefore, vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported to do well. The school has carried out all of the required safeguarding checks on staff and visitors.

The headteacher has been supported by the local authority in monitoring the work of the school. Together they are aware that joint working is required to improve teaching so that it is challenging and consistently good across the school.

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

Anne Pitt

Her Majesty's Inspector