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Mrs L Ironmonger
Waterloo Primary School
Worthington Street
Ashton-Under-Lyne
Lancashire
OL7 9NA

Dear Mrs Ironmonger

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 28 April 2010, for the time you and your colleagues gave to our discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit.

As a result of the inspection on 30 June and 1 July 2008, the school was asked to:

- ensure that Reception children have sufficient opportunities to explore and learn for themselves
- ensure that pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve their work in every class
- ensure that subject leaders check that agreed improvements are fully implemented across the school so as to eliminate inconsistencies in teaching, learning and achievement, especially in mathematics and science.

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.

The last inspection showed that, despite the setbacks caused by a fire and staff changes, satisfactory progress had been made since the previous inspection. The rate of improvement has since accelerated considerably, aided by the comprehensive improvement plans produced for the whole school and for sections of the school. Although improvement has been good, it is not outstanding because time is needed for the changed practice to have full impact on the achievement of pupils. Provision for pupils in the two Reception classes has been improved in a number of ways. Staff have worked hard to develop the curriculum to meet the needs of the Early Years Foundation Stage, including giving pupils ample opportunities to learn with an appropriate degree of independence. They have rightly done this mindful of the need to ensure that pupils develop the necessary skills and maturity before being asked to make decisions about their learning. They have gone to some lengths to ascertain pupils' interests and how these might be galvanised to strengthen learning. Effective work has been done, for example, to help those boys who find it difficult to engage in learning by making the curriculum more relevant to their interests. Staff use learning objectives carefully to ensure that the activities for pupils are in tune with what they need to learn. Observations of learning carried out by senior staff reflect inspection observations, showing that pupils are now given ample opportunity to learn with a degree of independence and with better concentration. This is supported by detailed planning and productive interaction between pupils, teachers and teaching assistants. Provision for outdoor learning has been significantly upgraded and the school has made astute choices in selecting new equipment and learning resources to support this.

Procedures to assess pupils' attainment, track their progress and give effective guidance to pupils have improved considerably. Marking is regular and detailed. Staff identify strengths in pupils' work and give advice on how to improve it. Pupils take this seriously and there is clear indication in their work that they improve by heeding the advice given in this way, and in the frequent oral guidance they receive in lessons. Pupils are now more engaged in assessing their own work and have a growing understanding of good performance. They feel more involved in school, as shown in the school's questionnaires to pupils and in the lessons observed. The school has appropriate policies for marking and giving feedback, assessment and moderation. They are adhered to well as the school continues to develop its procedures for assessment. Staff show a growing competence in using modern methods such as those advocated in the national 'assessment for learning' initiative.

The coordination of the curriculum, especially the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, has been strengthened considerably since the last inspection. This has helped to improve the consistency with which teaching and learning are planned, conducted and evaluated. It has also supported the school's project to develop a 'skills-based' curriculum', work on which is bearing fruit and has led to interesting projects being well developed. This remains work in progress and the school rightly plans to continue moving towards this goal. All subject coordinators have received appropriate training in subject leadership; this shows, for example, in the high level of cooperation between all staff in planning and delivering the curriculum. Staff are more aware of the whole-school curricular provision and their role in it. Cooperation and support are good among all staff. Teaching is more consistent; this is helped by the careful deployment of teaching assistants to support the use of computers, the preparation of teaching materials and the setting up of wall displays which aid learning.

The school has made astute use of a range of authoritative training courses, consultancy and participation in development projects provided by the local authority and other providers. These have improved staff awareness of procedures used in other schools and have strengthened the professional competence of staff.

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

Peter Toft
Her Majesty's Inspector