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26 February 2010

Mrs Julia Rouse
Headteacher
Marshland Primary School
Marshland Road
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Dear Mrs Rouse

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 25 February 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information you provided during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils and to the Chair of Governors who willingly gave up their time to talk with me. I spent a large proportion of the time looking at learning; observing six lessons and looking at pupils' work in books.

Since the last inspection the teaching profile has changed quite significantly. Two teachers have left, one has become part time and three new teachers have been appointed. The number of pupils on roll has fallen slightly. In September 2009 the school became part of the local authority's Improving Schools Programme.

As a result of the inspection on 18 and 19 March 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise achievement and standards in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school, and especially across Years 3 to 6
- increase the overall quality of teaching and learning to the level of the best practice in the school, particularly with reference to teachers' expectations of pupils and the level of challenge provided
- improve processes by which senior leaders and governors check how well the school is performing
- improve attendance.



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.

Attainment was low at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2009, particularly in English which showed a sharp decline when compared to the 2008 test results. The school's data indicates that pupils' overall achievement was affected by their inadequate rates of progress when they were in lower Key Stage 2. At the end of Key Stage 1 in 2009 attainment improved in reading, writing and mathematics. Tracking data, pupils' work and the lessons observed during this inspection indicate that the achievement of all pupils is now increasing and there are examples of accelerated progress across the school. However, although pupils' progress in the current Years 5 and 6 is improving and helping to close gaps in their learning, it has not yet improved sufficiently in English and mathematics to remedy some earlier slower progress. Challenging targets have been set for the current Year 6 but it is unlikely that the improvements now taking place will have time to have a full impact on the end of year test results in 2010. Nevertheless, leaders are not complacent and communicate high expectations. A range of support programmes are in place to help boost pupils' achievement. Across the school pupils' spelling, handwriting and presentation of their work remain common areas of weakness.

Senior leaders judge that the quality of teaching has improved and observations carried out during this visit support this view. No inadequate teaching was observed. The planning of lessons is much more consistent across the year groups and better use is made of assessment to plan future learning and match tasks to pupils' needs. This has helped to sharpen the focus of lessons and increase teachers' understanding of what pupils are expected to achieve. Teachers keep a close check on pupils' progress so they know which pupils need extra help to keep them on track. There has been a strong focus on the teaching of writing and pupils write extended pieces more regularly. There has been much emphasis on improving pupils' motivation and attitudes to learning. This is most successful when learning is practical, exciting and relevant; pupils' progress accelerates because they are motivated and actively involved in their learning, and there is a buzz of enthusiasm. On occasions where activities are less inspiring, pupils lose interest and concentration and their progress slows. Pupils say that behaviour has improved since the last inspection and there are now fewer disruptions in lessons because teachers set clearer expectations. They like the increased opportunities they now have in lessons to share their ideas with a partner because this helps them improve their work.

Since the last inspection the school has increased its range of strategies to promote good attendance. Parents, carers and pupils are more aware of the importance of regular attendance. Rewards which motivate pupils to attend are proving popular. As a result, attendance is improving. In 2009 it was close to the national average; an improvement over the previous year. The current attendance is up slightly for the

same period last year despite absences due to the snow and an outbreak of chicken pox. The level of persistent absence has fallen significantly.

The improvements taking place are as a result of increased monitoring and evaluation and the actions of the headteacher and senior leaders. The senior leadership team, which now includes the subject leaders for literacy and numeracy, has a better understanding where improvements in teaching are still required or where there are gaps in pupils' learning. The tracking data are providing a clear overview of pupils' progress and much better use is made of this to hold individual teachers responsible for the progress of pupils in their class. The more rigorous tracking of pupils' progress means that additional support can be provided quickly to accelerate the progress of pupils falling behind. The raising attainment plan drawn up in conjunction with the local authority is bringing a much sharper focus to the school's improvement. The plan is evaluated regularly and the outcomes shared with governors. The school has made effective use of the good practice in school and of local authority consultants to improve the quality of teaching. For example, the planning for literacy has been completely overhauled with assistance from the local authority and new teachers are well supported by in-school mentors. The teaching quality has strengthened during the last year due to the positive action taken by the headteacher and governors and this is having an impact on pupils' learning, progress and behaviour. The improvements seen to date indicate that the school is demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement but the senior leaders recognise the need to hasten the rate of improvement across the school to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they can. The school also makes effective use of the local authority School Improvement Partner to develop provision and bring about improvement.

This monitoring visit included a check on the school's safeguarding procedures and found them at this time to be meeting current requirements.

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

Brenda McIntosh
Additional Inspector