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Miss Julie Wragg  
Headteacher  
Stirling Primary School  
Prospect Place  
Doncaster  
South Yorkshire  
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Dear Miss Wragg

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 25 May 2010, for the time you gave to preparing for the visit and for the information which you provided before and during my visit.

Since the inspection the school's staffing and leadership team have changed considerably. This year, three teachers are newly qualified. Attempts to recruit a new member to the leadership team have been unsuccessful. Following a local authority review in March 2010, external support has been allocated to the school in the form of an associate headteacher and deputy headteacher.

As a result of the inspection in June 2008, the school was asked to

- Bring greater consistency to the quality of teaching to match the best.
- Develop provision and resources for information and communication technology (ICT).
- Improve provision for outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Develop parents' involvement in and support for their children's learning, particularly in terms of ensuring regular 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

inadequate progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Children's skills and knowledge are well below those typical for their age when they start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and standards are well below average when they leave at the end of Key Stage 2. There are peaks and troughs in pupils' progress ranging from good to inadequate, partly because of the irregular pattern of pupil admissions, but also because of variability in the quality of teaching. The school is increasing consistency in teaching and pupils' progress is improving accordingly. However, these improvements have not been in place long enough to even out the dips and to raise standards at the end of Key Stage 2.

A particular concern is pupils' exceptionally low attainment at the end of Key Stage 1, and this is despite strong teaching in the upper part of the key stage. Pupils are so far behind because they have been making limited progress during the Early Years Foundation Stage and lower Key Stage 1. This situation has improved considerably during the last two months as a result of the very effective external support.

The quality of teaching has improved since the inspection and the rate of improvement is accelerating as a result of the external support. There is a greater consistency in planning lessons that have a sharp focus and in accurately adapting tasks to meet the range of pupils' needs in the class. Most teachers use effective methods for assessing pupils' progress during the lesson to inform their future planning. The pupils are enthusiastic learners: they work very well independently and use discussion effectively to answer teachers' questions. In the minority of lessons where teaching is not so strong, pupils are not given enough time to work independently on interesting activities and teachers do not probe deeply enough to find out how much pupils have learned.

The school has increased the provision of computer equipment and this is used effectively to improve pupils' ICT skills and to enhance their learning in other subjects. Outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved considerably as part of the recent overall improvement in this area. The outdoor area is now being used much more skilfully to promote many aspects of children's learning and development, including their skills in learning independently. The school has extended its partnership with parents by inviting them to informative workshops, by reaching out to make contact with them and providing some support where appropriate. This has not yet substantially increased the number of parents coming into school to support their children's learning, which is a particular priority for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The improving partnership, however, has helped the school to improve pupils' attendance significantly, although it is still below average.

Leaders at senior and middle levels have contributed to improvements since the inspection and have demonstrated that, individually, they have the skills to make changes for the better. However, the pace of improvement has been slowed because these leaders have not worked efficiently as a team. Leadership tasks are not delegated enough and not all leaders are playing to their strengths. As a result new approaches take too long to become securely embedded across the whole school. There is insufficient involvement of the group of leaders in evaluating the school's work and in focusing the improvement plan precisely on those aspects of pupils' achievement that are the weakest.

The school's leaders have formed a positive partnership with the associate leaders and are using their guidance well to develop a more effective team approach to leadership. The accelerating improvement in Early Years Foundation Stage provision and in teaching throughout the school provides evidence of the positive impact of the partnership. The local authority has agreed a well-focussed plan which makes clear how the associate leaders will withdraw during the course of next year as the school's leadership team continues to build its own capacity to sustain improvement.

The school's procedures for keeping pupils safe meet requirements.

The local authority has a clear and detailed understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. As a result their external support is well tailored to the school's needs. The school has embraced this support positively and it is quickly bringing about improvements in key aspects of leadership and quality of provision.

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

John Rutherford  
Her Majesty's Inspector