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Mrs Sylvia Hudson  
Associate Headteacher  
Bramley Sunnyside Junior School  
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Dear Mrs Hudson

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 23 March 2010, for the time you gave to our pre-inspection discussions and for the information which you and your deputy headteacher provided during my visit. I would be grateful if you passed on my thanks to the Chair of Governing Body, the Assistant Head of School Effectiveness for Rotherham and the School Improvement Partner with whom I spoke. I would also appreciate it if you thanked the pupils I talked to at lunchtime. They were very helpful.

Significant turbulence in staffing is a major issue for the school. It is undermining efforts to achieve consistency and stability in the quality of educational provision. Since the last inspection the local authority has increased its involvement in the school, including undertaking a formal review of the effectiveness of the school's provision. The headteacher and a number of other staff have left the school, while others have resigned. Half of the staff currently in school are either on temporary contracts or are supply teachers. Some pupils have had several different teachers, which has disrupted their education. An experienced associate headteacher has been in post for the past three weeks.

As a result of the inspection on 15-16 April 2008, the school was asked to:

- increase pupils' rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- improve the quality of teaching and its effectiveness on pupils' learning.
- sharpen the focus on checks on performance so that senior leaders and governors can measure more effectively how well the school is doing.

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



leadership team, although industrious, has had insufficient time to effect major change or to tackle the deep-rooted issues that are causing pupils to underachieve.

In 2009, pupils' achievement was significantly below national averages overall. This continued a longstanding trend of inadequate progress stretching back several years. For example, the proportion of pupils making two levels of progress in English has declined year on year, while progress in mathematics has been consistently low over the same period. Recently, the progress of girls, some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and middle ability pupils has been particularly poor. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 2, particularly in mathematics is below average, this is disappointing given that the cohort who sat the exam in 2009 were above average at the end of Key Stage 1. During the inspection, pupils in the school were observed making progress that ranged from inadequate to good. Unfortunately, the school's latest monitoring and assessment of current rates of progress indicate widespread underachievement throughout the school. Most pupils are not on track to reach their targets or age-related expectations. Progress in reading has improved, but this is tempered by serious concerns in numeracy. More recently, a number of improvement strategies have been introduced. Now the school uses a common assessment and target setting system; has invested heavily in guided reading; and become more adept at identifying the gaps in pupils' knowledge. However, these actions have not yet been successful in raising standards or accelerating pupils' progress.

Over time, teaching has had an insufficient impact on pupils' learning and progress. There remains too much inadequate and satisfactory teaching. This is not good enough to eradicate the legacy of underachievement or to enable pupils to recover the lost ground in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Inconsistency in staff expectations and the level of challenge in lessons persists. Some staff still lack the confidence to allow pupils to learn more independently and resort to spoon-feeding them. Lessons can lack pace, precision and focus. Consequently, pupils become disengaged or their attention drifts. On occasion, teachers fail to model or exemplify the behaviours they demand of pupils. Nonetheless, there is some effective practice in classrooms which needs to be shared more widely and replicated. Some important lessons have been learned. Staff are embracing the practical guidance and training from their peers and local authority advisors, which they accept is necessary. This is giving them confidence and enhancing the quality of their planning and delivery. As a result, they are setting clear learning objectives for each lesson. They have a better idea of how well pupils are doing, relative to their targets, and are matching work more closely to pupils' specific needs. Skilful re-focusing and corrective intervention; pausing lessons to evaluate the extent of pupils' learning, giving them the chance to be creative and demonstrate their new knowledge and understanding; and making learning fun, interactive and connected are key features of the best teaching observed. Another bright spot is the largely positive attitude and behaviour of pupils.

The experienced associate headteacher has been a catalyst for change. She, together with the empowered deputy headteacher, is instilling a clarity of purpose in the school. They are aided by committed staff, who now understand the vital role they have to play in the school's improvement. Equally, accountability has been tightened up. There is a sharper focus on strategically and systematically addressing the key issues for improvement.

The focus has been on trying to build secure foundations upon which to launch the school's recovery. Leaders are establishing a team ethos and rationalising provision to begin to create a greater consistency of approach. Central has been the recognition that change is necessary if pupils are to reach their potential. This is starting to promote an enhanced learning ethos and atmosphere. The school is using more rigorous procedures to assess and evaluate all aspects of its work. This has led to more reliable and valid data, which is providing staff with a more objective view of the effectiveness of actions taken and the quality of education that it currently offers to pupils. Ultimately, during the two years since the previous inspection, pupils' achievement has continued to decline. The school has, therefore, been unable to demonstrate a better capacity for sustained improvement. There has not been enough time for the new strategies, procedures and ethos to take effect. There remains substantial further work to do to raise standards and achievement to a satisfactory level.

After some initial failings the local authority have been decisive and given the school considerable support and challenge. Equally the work of the School Improvement Partner has been thorough and candid. Their on-going intervention is both necessary and well regarded by the school. Governors have proven themselves to be proactive and challenging of the school. They are ambitious for pupils and are demanding that standards rise.

This monitoring visit included a check on the school's safeguarding procedures and found them to be secure and 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

John Young  
Her Majesty's Inspector

