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Mrs Kathy Levey
Castleford Park Junior School
Medley Street
Castleford
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WF10 4BB

Dear Mrs Levey

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 May 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to the Chair of Governors, staff, the local authority representative and the groups of pupils who gave up some of their time during lunchtime to meet with me.

There have been some changes to the school's context since the previous inspection in June 2008. The deputy headteacher has had two periods when he has been seconded to other local authority schools and an acting deputy headteacher has taken on and currently holds these responsibilities. Two teachers have left and one teacher is currently absent, taking extended leave, and two temporary newly qualified teachers are employed at the school. The school has restructured leadership roles; some members of staff have only recently taken on their new responsibilities.

As a result of the inspection on 25-26 June 2008, the school was asked to:

- Raise achievement and standards, in particular for the most able pupils.
- Ensure whole school and individual pupil targets are sufficiently challenging.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that the work matches more closely pupils' needs and marking helps pupils to understand how to improve their work.



Having considered all of 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.

Although satisfactory overall, improvement and its impact have varied over time and between the issues identified at the last inspection. That said there is currently a growing determination to make further improvements.

Since the previous inspection attainment has varied; in 2008 it was below average, and was particularly low in English. Although attainment in English improved in 2009 attainment overall remained below average. Attainment in mathematics declined in 2008 and 2009 and the school's data indicate that this decline has been halted. In 2009 the proportion reaching the higher Level 5 in English improved and was average but in mathematics and science it remained below average. The progress that pupils make during their time at the school, as indicated by value added measures, places the school in the lowest performing 10% of all schools nationally. This is because the proportion of pupils making two levels of progress during their time at the school is lower than at many other schools. The school is aware of the need to improve the progress that all pupils make but there remains much work to be done. The school has begun to work more closely with its two partner infant schools to improve transition arrangements. The better transition arrangements are beginning to improve the progress that pupils are making in Year 3 and Year 4. The school's own data indicate that the progress pupils are making is improving, particularly in reading, but there remains a small, but significant number, of pupils who are not on track to make two full levels of progress.

The school's processes and systems to set targets have been refined. There is greater rigor in the system of setting targets for individuals, classes and whole year groups. A review of the assessment cycle has meant that pupils' attainment and progress is now checked. This is ensuring that extra help and support is provided for pupils who are falling behind. Regular pupil progress reviews are holding teachers to account for the progress of the pupils in their care. However, it is only relatively recently that senior leaders have been involved in these for every class. Although this is beginning to show some benefit, this development has been too recent to be able to gauge its full impact. Discussions with pupils indicate that they know that their targets are designed to help them and most know some of the detail within them; this is an improvement from the time of the last inspection.

The teaching sampled during the inspection demonstrated that teaching is improving. Although much that was observed was satisfactory, and none was inadequate, there were some good features identified. The headteacher gives teachers much professional autonomy and trust in respect of planning formats and the detail of planning required on a weekly or daily basis. The school's approach ensures that all weekly timetables identify learning objectives. However, there is inconsistency in the detail of planning of modifications for different ability groups within each class. This varies in the extent of the detail, the depth of planning and in the use made of assessment information and on rare occasions planning is absent



Some year group planning is not sufficiently tailored to meet the precise needs of the particular class and the differing groups of pupils. The use of support staff is generally appropriate but often the only modifications made for lower ability pupils is the help provided by support staff. Sometimes pupils spend too much time listening to their teachers and not enough time working independently. Consequently, the pace of learning slows and pupils lose interest.

The marking of work has improved and is mostly done regularly. In the examples seen it was more precise in written work than in mathematics. Some very good marking was seen and this correctly identified what pupils could do, linked closely to planned learning, and routinely provided pupils with ways to improve their work. However, the quality of marking still varies and sometimes is limited to encouraging comments. Pupils stated that they valued their teachers' comments but were not always able to demonstrate how they had improved their work as a consequence of these comments.

The school has made satisfactory progress in developing its capacity for further improvement. The quality of teaching is evaluated soundly; however, the focus for observations is more often concerned with the teaching and less with the impact of teaching on learning and progress. There is evidence that school leaders know the work of the school and they have accurately identified the most important areas for improvement. Appropriate plans are in place. However, the rigor and precision of senior leaders in checking and reporting on the impact of new developments is inconsistent. Governors continue to know and value the work of the school. They are aware of where most improvement is needed and identify accurately that they need to challenge more precisely the work of the school. This inspection was able to confirm that appropriate actions are being taken and, although at the early stages, these are beginning to improve the progress of pupils.

The school engages effectively with the local authority, which has provided appropriate support.

This monitoring visit included a check on the school's safeguarding procedures by scrutinising the single central record and found this to be secure.

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

Amraz Ali
Her Majesty's Inspector

