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8 June 2010

Mrs Jane Barlow
The Headteacher
Bearwood Primary School
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Dear Mrs Barlow

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 your deputy headteacher and your business manager gave to our telephone discussions ahead of the visit, and for the information which you provided before and during my time with you. I would be grateful if you could thank members of staff, your School Improvement Partner and the group of pupils who met with me. Please also pass on my thanks to the chair of the governing body for attending the feedback meeting.

The governing body appointed a new chair of governors in July 2009. The number of pupils on roll has increased slightly since the last inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 2 July 2008, the school was asked to:

- ensure that tasks in lessons offer the right level of challenge for all pupils and, especially the more able
- extend target setting so that individual pupils know their next steps in learning
- increase opportunities for pupils to learn about the breadth of cultures and customs in 21st century Britain.

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.

Children continue to make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage from mostly low starting points. When they start in Year 1 the achievement profile is below average, although it is stronger in some aspects such as personal, social and emotional development than in communication, language and literacy. End of Key



Stage 2 national tests in 2009 signalled significant improvements in English, mathematics and science, and pupils' overall attainment was close to age expectations nationally. Improvements in Key Stage 1 were not as marked and the attainment of pupils was particularly low in writing. The majority of pupils throughout the school, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making accelerated progress. This is more marked in Key Stage 2 where for the first time in four years the rate of progress, taking pupils' context into account, was not significantly lower than average. This positive picture is being maintained and a greater proportion of pupils are on track to achieve at the higher levels. Younger pupils still have some ground to make up to reach the school's challenging attainment targets by the end of the year. Monitoring and assessment systems are rigorous and more secure. Consequently, staff can tailor lesson planning and other interventions to spur pupils on and ensure that variations in the performance of groups are tackled well. The gaps have narrowed, for example in the attainment of pupils eligible for free school meals and others. Writing remains the greatest challenge for pupils across the school, and the school is rightly focusing on tackling this as evidenced during a visit to a Year 3 class where pupils were working hard, and with success, to improve their skills.

Brief visits to a number of lessons confirmed the leadership team's accurate assessment that pupils are being consistently taught well. Planning identifies a suitable range of activities to meet the range of pupils' needs and a combination of encouragement and incisive questioning helps teachers gauge levels of understanding and adjust activities accordingly. Pupils enjoy their lessons; they are eager to learn and show off their work. They are used to working well together and enjoy sharing ideas with each other. This was evident in a mathematics lesson where Year 6 pupils were budgeting for a 'post-SATs' party. Pupils are contributing in no small way to this improving picture. The school has accurately been described a 'calm oasis'. Pupils behave exceptionally well and no time is wasted in lessons and, as a result, teachers and learning support assistants can focus on ensuring that pupils at all levels can be stretched in their learning. Pupils know what levels they are at and what they need to do to reach their targets. This is reflected in their 'reach for the stars' comments which are on display in classrooms. Pupils respond well to 'two stars and a wish' which enables them to reflect on two things they have learnt or done well and one area where they could do better. The books of the older children are punctuated with 'green pen' comments which show their skills in assessing their work. Teachers' written comments steer pupils in the right direction and nudge them to do better.

Pupils' attendance shows an improving trend and is above average. This is because the school has effective systems in place and is working well with parents to minimise unnecessary absence. Despite the school's best efforts, a few children are persistently absent and this slows down their progress. Pupils are able to provide examples of how they are learning about faiths and other cultures and staff look for opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of what key celebrations such as Diwali entail.

The school's sustained improvement since the last inspection is being driven by an ambitious and strong leadership team who is well supported by staff and governors alike. The team shares a common determination to ensure that the school's good provision is successfully translated into good outcomes for the pupils. The culture of learning extends to staff and governors. Professional learning and opportunities to reflect on and share good practice are given high priority. This is being translated, for instance into consistently better teaching and equipping governors to be more skilled in holding the school to account. The school is meticulous in ensuring that it meets its statutory safeguarding requirements for recording vetting checks. The local authority provides valued support and is effectively monitoring the school's journey of improvement.

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 Kennedy
Her Majesty's Inspector