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Judith Baskerville
Headteacher
Norman Street Primary School
Norman Street
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Dear Mrs Baskerville

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 19 May 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information you provided before and during my visit. Thanks also to the Chair of the Governing Body and to the pupils I spoke with at our meeting and around the school.

At the beginning of 2009 the headteacher suffered a serious accident and was subsequently away from school for two terms. During this time the substantive deputy headteacher became acting headteacher. There has been an increase in the whole school responsibilities of the three assistant headteachers serving on the leadership team.

As a result of the inspection on 05 and 06 June 2008, the school was asked to:

ensure that more pupils, including the most able, made consistent progress and reached higher standards

improve the curriculum so that it included experiences that were more stimulating for pupils' learning

extend the roles of school leaders, including governors, in evaluating and improving the consistency of teaching and the quality of the curriculum.

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.

Pupils' overall achievement in 2009 was better than that recorded in the previous two years. The improved achievement has helped increase pupils' overall attainment since the last inspection, which is now broadly average by the end of Key Stage 2. More-able pupils did better than expected, beating their predictions for securing the higher levels in English and mathematics.

Since the last inspection much has been done to increase the rate of pupils' learning and progress. The school has installed in every classroom interactive whiteboards that are used very well and make lessons enjoyable. Pupils speak of doing 'lots of activities that help us learn and the teachers make it interesting and fun'. The quality of lessons seen was generally good with none that could be described as lack-lustre. Lessons are well organised, hold the interest of pupils and move their learning on at a pace. Pupils' engagement is high due to the purposeful activities undertaken. Every class contains different ability groups each having appropriate tasks set. These groups work well together and when brought back as a whole class, pupils were seen to help improve each other's work. Many talked with pride when, as a result of their hard work, they had moved up into the next ability group. The comprehensive tracking system provides classroom teachers with accurate information on pupils' progress. This helps inform short-, medium- and long-term planning for groups and individuals. It has contributed very well to pupils making more consistent progress and in attaining higher because teachers are alerted more quickly to their needs. The reliable data indicate the strong likelihood of these improved rates of attainment and achievement continuing. Teaching assistants and other part-time staff are used very well and make a significant contribution to learning as seen, for example, in a French lesson where pupils in Years 5 and 6 were able confidently to name many European countries including Wales and Luxembourg, securing language skills and geographical knowledge.

The improved curriculum is creative, broad and of a thematic approach. During this visit extensive repairs to the large perimeter wall were being made as a result of frost damage. The Early Years Foundation Stage children were recently involved in a topic, at their suggestion, that allowed them to pretend to be builders repairing this wall. This helped develop their literacy and numeracy skills as they learned how many bricks would be required and the range of materials and equipment needed to rebuild the wall. Other projects, for instance the work being done in Key Stage 2 on volcanoes, helps bring real-life topical issues into the classroom that stimulate pupils' interest and help secure better learning. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities in which many are involved.

The school has received targeted support from the local authority by involvement in the Improving Schools Programme. This, with the strengthened senior leadership team, has provided challenge and support for the school and has contributed to the



improved curriculum offer and better quality teaching. Classroom teachers speak of a willingness to share best practice. Lesson observations are more regular, helping teachers become increasingly confident and skilled. Learning walks by senior leaders are now common as is the school's focus on monitoring lesson planning, including teachers' deployment of assistants and setting appropriate challenge for the ability range of pupils. Monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and the impact of the curriculum is regular and accurate. The governing body has been less involved in evaluating teaching and the curriculum because of the many changes in personnel and governors' relative inexperience. While the minutes from the governing body's meetings reflect an involved and well-organised body, governors recognise the need to be more exact in their understanding of pupils' attainment and achievement by being more rigorous in holding the school to account in this area.

Before the headteacher's absence, other senior and middle leaders were extending their roles successfully in response to the improvements required in the last inspection report. An acceleration of these responsibilities was necessary during the headteacher's time away from school and continues to strengthen the school's capacity for further improvement to good effect.

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

Peter Cox
Additional Inspector