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Mrs Cleo Cunningham
Headteacher
Cavendish Close Junior School
Deborah Drive
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Dear Mrs Cunningham

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 1 July 2010, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Discussions with members of staff, representatives of the governing body and pupils were also very helpful in evaluating progress.

As a result of the inspection on 2–3 July 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards and improve the consistency of progress made in English, mathematics and science, especially that of the more able
- improve leadership at all levels so that target setting and improvement planning are more challenging
- improve the quality of teaching and learning by more rigorous monitoring and by sharing good practice
- develop the role of the governing body so that it can play a full part in the school's improvement.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that, at this time, the school has made inadequate progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement. Since the time of the previous inspection, temporary leadership arrangements have had a significant impact on stability and impeded the pace of progress. A permanent headteacher was appointed in September 2009, and has worked effectively to raise staff morale and build the school's capacity for sustained improvement.

In recent years, overall standards in the key subjects of English, mathematics and science have been significantly below the national average by the time pupils leave in Year 6. In 2009, standards dropped, reversing the slight improvement in English and mathematics shown in 2008. With the exception of pupils eligible for free school



meals, the standards of all groups of learners was low. Too few able pupils reached the highest standards in these key subjects. The progress made by pupils has been inadequate over the last three years. In 2009, the progress of middle ability boys and high ability pupils was especially weak. The small number of pupils with special educational needs made satisfactory progress as a result of small guided groups designed to improve their basic skills, and due to the support of teaching assistants and learning mentors.

Despite an additional focus on Year 6 this year, assessment information indicates that low standards remain as pupils have not been able to catch up on earlier underachievement. Tracking across other year groups show that pupils are beginning to catch up but patterns of progress are uneven across year groups, and writing is identified as a weaker aspect. Through clear procedures and a consistent approach, the headteacher has tackled a deterioration in behaviour and attendance which had become a barrier to learning and progress. This is evident in the good behaviour observed, improved attendance and a reduction in the number of pupils persistently absent. Systems are now in place to collect assessment information regularly to track progress, and to support more effective targeting for intervention. Further refinement is needed to enable leaders to compare school assessments with national standards. There is also recognition that the level of challenge in the school's targets will need to increase to narrow the gap with national standards.

As part of the local authority's Improving Schools Programme (ISP), the headteacher has made good use of specialist consultants in literacy and numeracy to support staff training in the use of assessment, lesson planning and delivery. Although there is more work to do, lessons observed during the visit highlighted good features. Pupils demonstrate a growing confidence in using and applying literacy techniques, for example, creating tension in extended writing. Marking is developing well to support a strong sense of dialogue between teachers and pupils to support next steps in learning. Inconsistencies remain in the use of assessment to check on pupils' understanding during lessons, standards of presentation and the differentiation of tasks to meet individual pupils' needs.

Improvement planning has strengthened through regular monitoring and clear indicators to check on progress. Lesson observations undertaken by the headteacher are beginning to support an evaluation of teaching quality. Plans are well advanced to ensure other key staff have the necessary skills to contribute effectively to quality assurance activities. The governing body has benefitted from training and access to more detailed information. They are increasingly involved in monitoring the school's work and progress. Important strategic decisions have been made to build on improved capacity; a planned increase in management time aims to support greater delegation of responsibility from the headteacher to other leaders in the school.

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

Nada Trikić
Her Majesty's Inspector

