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Mr Stuart Calvert
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Dear Mr Calvert

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 phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the staff and pupils who gave up their time to talk to me.

Since the last inspection, one member of staff has left and a temporary teacher has been appointed, with a substantive appointment planned for September 2010. In order to accelerate pupils' learning, a new part-time teacher is working with an additional group for mathematics and literacy in Year 6, and three new teaching assistants have also been appointed. A pastoral support worker has been appointed for three days a week for the academic year 2009/10.

The governing body has a new Chair and Vice-Chair and a full complement of governors.

Classes are now organised into mixed age groups in order to manage fluctuating pupil numbers. In September 2010, more than twice as many children as expected entered the Reception class. A higher proportion of pupils than is found nationally join the school at times other than the start of the school year. About a quarter of the current pupils started mid-year over the last four terms.

The school is a Dorset Priority School and is taking part in the Improving Schools Project. The headteacher is leaving the school in July 2010.

As a result of the inspection in April 2008, the school was asked to:



- make sure that all pupils, especially the higher attainers, are given appropriately challenging work to help them do their best
- improve the consistency of the quality of teaching and ensure all teachers set a brisk pace in lessons to increase the rate of learning
- raise attendance levels by strengthening the systems for monitoring absence and lateness.

Having considered all 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.

Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 and enter Year 3 with attainment in line with expectations for their age. However, results from Key Stage 2 tests in 2009 confirmed a legacy of underachievement for pupils Year 6. Attainment and progress for this group were significantly below average overall, especially for girls. Attainment in English was satisfactory, but the school is aware that pupils make more progress in reading than in writing. However, recent data show that pupils in the current Year 6 are on track to achieve standards that are broadly average overall. This represents satisfactory progress from their starting points in Year 3. The greatest improvement is in mathematics and a much higher proportion of pupils are achieving the higher levels in reading. This is the result of improvements in the quality of teaching as well as targeted intervention, including one-to-one support for some pupils. Extra staffing also allows smaller teaching groups in Year 6 for both literacy and numeracy. Intensive guidance for teachers to help them improve the quality of pupils' writing across the school is also beginning to make a difference. However, the use of personalised targets to develop pupils' writing skills based on detailed assessment of their performance is still in its early stages.

The impact of support from the local authority for teachers and the development of subject leadership in numeracy and literacy is beginning to show through longer term, sustainable improvements in both teaching and learning. Teaching is more consistent than at the time of the last inspection. It is broadly satisfactory, with some that is good and none that is inadequate. In lessons, pupils make securely satisfactory progress and, where the teaching is stimulating, progress is good. Most lessons proceed at a brisk pace and teachers are now ensuring that work is matched to pupils' needs and are providing suitably challenging work, especially for more able pupils. Regular feedback through marking is provided in line with a new policy. However, it is not always sufficiently focused on what pupils need to do in order to improve. In the best lessons, the quality of questioning by both teachers and teaching assistants encourages pupils to think for themselves and find their own answers to problems.



Teachers are now planning together in a much more systematic way. Liaison with teaching assistants ensures they are aware of the teachers' expectations before the lesson begins. Teaching assistants need to make certain that they always model the behaviour required by the teacher, for example by ensuring that they remain silent and encourage all pupils to listen when the teacher is addressing the whole class.

A whole-school focus on embedding the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) into lessons is evident in classrooms where pupils work very cooperatively together. Older pupils in particular willingly take responsibility for their own learning and are able to talk about their work with confidence and insight. However, sometimes opportunities for them to assess their own work and that of others are missed. The school has successfully identified the underlying barriers to learning for some underachieving pupils. They are tackling this through strategies to raise pupils' self-esteem and confidence. The recent appointment of a pastoral support worker in collaboration with another local school has supported this work well.

A comprehensive system to track pupils' progress has been introduced since the last inspection. The wealth of assessment data available is used to identify pupils who are underachieving so that appropriate intervention can be provided. However, this information is not analysed systematically to provide a summary picture of progress over time for classes, year groups or other significant groups such as those with special educational needs. Consequently, teachers are not aware of the impact that their better teaching is having on outcomes for the whole school. Although there are many examples where intervention for individual pupils with special educational needs has enabled them to make good or even better progress, this work is not systematically monitored to measure the impact of specific programmes.

The school has made a considerable effort to improve attendance and punctuality since the last inspection. Absence rates are now just below the national average. They have worked effectively with outside agencies to reduce the number of persistent absentees. The school does not currently have a system to ensure that parents are contacted quickly in the event of the absence of pupils who walk to school alone. Some administrative deficiencies in the single central record were resolved by the end of the monitoring visit.

The school has received extensive and effective support from the local authority, particularly in improving teaching and progress in literacy and numeracy, implementing SEAL and assessment for learning and improving the systems for managing behaviour. A new school improvement partner has provided the school's leadership and management team with constructive critical advice, and a successful local headteacher is providing regular support for the current headteacher. A new Local Authority governor is providing extremely effective guidance for the governing body. The school and the local authority have worked together to find a manageable balance between providing appropriate intervention to make up a legacy of underachievement for some older pupils and improving the quality of teaching and learning overall. This strategy for long term sustainable development is now



beginning to have an impact on pupils' progress across the school and thus demonstrates a better capacity to improve. However, the current headteacher is leaving at the end of this academic year. The governing body needs to make every effort to ensure that the school can continue to make progress through the timely appointment of a substantive headteacher to replace him.

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

Mary Massey
Her Majesty's Inspector