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Mr Stephen Dennis
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Dennis

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 29 January 2010 and for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please also pass my thanks to the deputy headteacher, the leaders for learning, the vice-chair of governors and the charming group of pupils that met with me to share their views of the school.

Following the last inspection, the previous headteacher took up a job share with the newly appointed deputy headteacher who was then herself incapacitated for a term. As a result, a leader for learning became both acting deputy headteacher and part-time acting headteacher until the substantive deputy headteacher returned. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2009. Two new leaders for learning were appointed, in September 2009. Three staff took maternity leave and some subsequently returned on a part-time basis. Adjustments have also been made to the roles of middle managers.

As a result of the inspection on 13–14 February 2008, the school was asked to:

- eliminate the pockets of underachievement in English and mathematics and so raise standards overall by ensuring teaching is consistently good in every class
- ensure that the school development plan contains measurable outcomes so that improvements can be monitored robustly and there is a realistic understanding of the outcomes for pupils
- ensure that governors use the right level of information to enable them to hold the school to account for its performance.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.



National test results at the end of Year 6 remained broadly average overall last year and attainment in English was the highest for four years. The attainment of boys exceeded both local authority and national averages. Nonetheless, results remained below average in mathematics and science. Data showing the value the school adds to pupils' learning from their starting points indicated a downward trend from test results in 2007 to those in 2009. However, progress has improved markedly over the past year. As a result of action taken, a large majority of pupils are now attaining at least age-related levels in each year group, and making progress at least in line with that expected per year across the school in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Inspection evidence in lessons and pupils' work indicate that standards since September, especially in English and mathematics, have improved.

Programmes put in place by the school's new leadership team are beginning to impact on raising standards. Major factors for this success are the increased curriculum time for English and mathematics, rigorous and systematic use of assessment data, effective monitoring and support programmes for teaching, and considerable staff training. Some pockets of underachievement remain, especially in mathematics and science but less so in English. Senior leaders have completed a thorough analysis of pupils' achievement and attainment and identified specific weakness in the achievement of girls and average pupils in mathematics. Swift actions have been taken to tackle this. Data analysis has been used effectively to identify those most at risk of underachieving and more able pupils, and has resulted in well-planned interventions, support strategies and challenge. Pupils also say that 'work is more challenging'.

Rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning has brought about improvement. Leaders know there is more to do to secure consistently good teaching by sharing and spreading the good practice already seen in the school. Strengths are seen in matching work to pupils' differing abilities, sharing learning objectives and success criteria, detailed questioning of pupils and effective use of resources to make learning engaging and enjoyable. For example, in an English lesson, teaching most effectively built on pupils' understanding of rhymes and couplets through sharp questioning and use of technology to share ideas. Good use is made of assessment and tracking data when planning learning and teachers usually provide helpful guidance when marking pupils' work, but rarely link this to pupils' targets. Class teachers and leaders of learning are more involved in monitoring pupils' progress and in turn this drives their accountability to ensure pupils make the progress of which they are capable.

The much improved school development plan has been completely reviewed, and staff and governors were involved in this process. It covers the most important priorities for improvement, with clear action plans for subject leaders. It contains measurable criteria for evaluating the impact and outcomes of planned changes, with clear monitoring procedures dating when actions should be achieved. As yet, it is too soon to measure the full impact of the changes introduced but developments



are monitored robustly and there is a realistic understanding of the outcomes for all pupils.

Good improvement is seen in the work of governors. They receive regular and good quality information about the school's work. Each curriculum area and year group have an assigned governor and, as one teacher said, 'this results in meaningful visits from governors'. Governors have undertaken further training to sharpen their expertise. Inspection evidence confirms that governors know and understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and now hold the school to account for its performance.

Support from the local authority and the school improvement partner has been welcomed and valued by the school. The school has clearly benefited from effective advice, monitoring and support.

Sharper systems for monitoring, evaluating and developing the school's performance are yielding clear improvements in pupils' attainment and progress. Together, they demonstrate good progress in building the capacity to improve.

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

Sheila Browning
Additional Inspector

