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Mr Peter Howard
Fairisle Junior School
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Dear Mr Howard

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 5 May 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the staff I visited and had discussions with, the chair of governors, your partnership headteacher and the school improvement partner.

I note that since the last inspection there have been a number of staff changes and that the deputy headteacher has retired. In addition, the local authority has provided intensive support and you have been teamed up with a successful local school to provide extra leadership experience and professional development for your staff.

As a result of the inspection on 7-8 May 2008, the school was asked to improve the standards and progress of pupils in English, mathematics and science, to use assessment systems more effectively and to develop the role of the middle managers.

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.

Following the previous inspection, improvement was slow to start. Although better use of assessment systems and the roles of subject leaders were developing, this had had little impact on raising standards. Consequently, the 2009 national tests results were disappointing and exceptionally low. This was swiftly addressed and



resulted in further intensive support, firstly from the local authority and, from January 2010, a partnership with another highly effective school. This highly focused support has made a very significant difference to the rate of improvements in the provision and outcomes for pupils. As one senior leader stated, 'Progress has been like a steam train this year.'

Despite all the improvement in the quality of provision, the impact on pupils' achievement is very recent. Comparative national data up to 2009 indicate pupils made low levels of progress from entering the school. After considerable professional development involving staff from the partnership school, teaching has improved, many more lessons are good and standards have started to rise. As a result, attainment for pupils currently in Year 6 has very significantly improved from that in 2009 and is now broadly as expected for their age. Some pupils have made twice the expected progress from when they were in Year 5. Through the rest of the school, progress is at least satisfactory and sometimes better. Lesson plans are highly detailed, take into account what pupils already know and set out what is to be learnt and how this will be achieved. One significant difference has been the use of 'success criteria' which help pupils identify what they will learn. These are often mentioned during whole-class discussions and the pupils can confidently talk about what these mean in terms of raising their own achievement.

Progress against the issue regarding the use of whole-school assessment is good where there are suitably developed systems in place to record and use the regular assessment information. From this, better use is made of the available data which inform the teachers' planning. As a consequence, pupils at risk of underachievement are targeted and supported, thus ensuring they make up any lost ground. Pupils are also able to see what they need to do to move to the next level and are developing higher aspirations about what they will finally achieve. Pupils feel highly motivated by the new systems and the higher aspirations given to them. They rightly say behaviour is good and lessons are more challenging. Work in their books confirms this, with clear evidence of the much improved progress that has been made in all year groups, particularly since January 2010.

The role of subject leaders has been strengthened and they demonstrate a suitable working knowledge of what is happening in their subjects. They carry out regular work sampling and assessment analysis and help to formulate plans for the future. They are not yet actively involved in lesson observations although, as their expertise improves, senior leaders plan to develop this. Improvement on this issue since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

The school recognises there is still some way to go to ensure the sustainability of the improvements, but with the evident determination of both senior leaders and the rest of the staff there are high levels of motivation to make sure this continues. With all these recent developments and the improvements for pupils, along with the continuing good level of challenge from the governing body, school improvement

partner and local authority and with support from the school partnership, there is now, once again, a better capacity to improve before the next inspection.

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

David Collard
Additional inspector