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Mr David Meades
Barton Junior School
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Dear Mr Meades

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 30 June 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 pupils, staff, members of the federation leadership team, Chair of the Governing Body and School Improvement Partner who spoke with me.

As a result of the inspection on 8 and 9 July 2008, the school was asked to:

- establish consistently rapid progress throughout all year groups in order to raise standards in English, mathematics and science
- ensure that lessons and the curriculum have the necessary excitement and challenge to create the interest and independent learning that motivate pupils to do well
- make better use of monitoring information to assess the impact of initiatives, gain a realistic view of the school's effectiveness and sharpen targets for further improvement.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made:

good progress in making improvements

good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

For Year 6 pupils, attainment is becoming closer to average. It has risen substantially in English, mathematics and science since the last inspection when it was low in all three subjects. In 2009, attainment rose to broadly average in science, although fewer pupils than average reached the expected Level 4 in English and the higher Level 5 in mathematics. Girls attained more highly than boys. Unvalidated test results for 2010 indicate that attainment has continued to rise in mathematics. In



English, more pupils have reached Level 4, although not Level 5. In science, final assessments have not yet been made; school data for earlier in the year show that attainment is on track to at least match 2009 standards.

Year 6 pupils make much better progress than at the last inspection. Progress rose to significantly above average in 2009. The school's data for 2010 indicate a continued rise in the proportion of Year 6 pupils making the expected two levels of progress in English and mathematics. In 2009, pupils eligible for free school meals made better progress than their peers in mathematics and science. Progress varies across year groups, with some pupils making considerable strides forward that make up for previous dips, but there are instances of others not making the expected progress. Progress in lessons varies. It has increased as a result of improved teaching and more focused support from the study support managers. The school's records show faster progress in reading than in writing and mathematics.

Pupils report that lessons are much more practical and interesting. Classrooms provide a welcoming environment that involves pupils more in their learning through use of targets, assessing how well they are doing and knowing how to improve. Pupils enjoy working together during the increased number of cross-curricular weeks and days. They do more work on common topics across subjects, in which teachers' enthusiasm in planning these together engenders pupils' excitement and interest. Pupils are developing more independence in terms of trying for themselves and with others, before seeking assistance, and through structuring some of their own development in reading.

Teaching quality has improved through shared professional development and ideas across the federation. Much of the teaching is strong with well-targeted support in class, but some pockets of teaching and support are weaker. Many activities excite and involve pupils in working collaboratively and thinking on their own. Books show that pupils have done a variety of work. Where progress was slower, pupils did not always know exactly what they needed to do, start working soon enough or have sufficiently challenging activities. Opportunities were missed for involving all in answering or talking with partners.

Plans have effectively raised the quality of provision, with a consequent marked impact on pupils' enjoyment, behaviour, attendance, progress and attainment. They have led to improvements in teachers' accountability and their contribution to the planning of a more creative curriculum. Staff collaborate across the federation in many ways and have a clearer shared goal for improvement. Middle leaders are more involved in monitoring, from which they have identified appropriate areas for improvement, although development plans for subjects and the school do not systematically build these in or ensure that success criteria are achievable and measurable in terms of their impact. The impact of interventions is monitored for each pupil but there is room for sharper short-term overviews of this provision to inform strategic planning. The actions and their impact across the school and on the issues raised at the last inspection demonstrate the school's growing capacity for



continued improvement. There is room for action planning and evaluation to focus more on the school's progress on the third issue identified at the last inspection.

Staff use data more effectively to identify where intervention is needed, and this is increasing pupils' progress. The tracking system shows pupils' progress in English and mathematics, although not science, within year groups. There is room for teachers and leaders to use this more frequently to monitor overall progress within the key stage and whether any previous low progress has been caught up. For example, governors receive regular summaries of attainment in each year group but not of the progress within the year or key stage.

Evaluation of the teaching observed jointly during the inspection was accurate. However, a previous monitoring summary appeared too generous as it did not represent the full range of teaching in lessons and support sessions. Leaders monitor teaching and provide consequent support to improve it. But records of observations of lessons and support sessions do not routinely identify the key areas for development, so that staff can work together to focus future support, self-evaluation and monitoring on them.

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

Gill Close
Her Majesty's Inspector

