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Mrs J Wright  
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Dear Mrs Wright

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 26 January 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 and chair of governors for their contributions. Thank you for the range of documentation you provided, such as the school's self evaluation, and documents related to safeguarding.

A new headteacher was appointed soon after the previous inspection and she started in September 2008. This was followed by the appointment of two assistant headteachers and three new phase leaders. Changes to middle management structures have been in place since September 2009. The school is part of the local authority's 'Ensuring Success' programme aimed at helping schools raise pupils' attainment in basic skills.

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

- ensure that safeguarding checks were completed, recorded and maintained
- ensure that pupils are challenged in their work, which is matched to their abilities, and that teachers' marking helps pupils improve
- develop the roles of senior leaders so that that they can monitor and assess the impact of actions taken to improve pupils' learning and progress.

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



In the last national tests the school achieved its best results for some time. Nearly all groups of pupils made better progress than at the time of the last inspection, so that they reach broadly average levels of attainment. Their achievement has therefore improved well. Pupils have good attitudes and appreciation of their school, which is now harnessed to good effect. In lessons pupils speak clearly and convey their opinions confidently. Their writing, particularly that of the older pupils, is usually interesting, accurately punctuated and presented to good effect. Their mathematical abilities lag a little behind their English skills and the school recognises this is an area on which to concentrate to boost results in national tests in the summer. The school's targets were largely met last year and higher proportions of pupils are set to reach the expected levels this year.

Teachers plan activities well so that pupils of different abilities are catered for and challenged in their thinking. Recently introduced 'child-initiated' activities for all classes at the start of the day have proved popular in motivating pupils to learn. Lessons are taught with an eye to making them practical where possible. Pupils in Year 2 could not wait to experiment to see if different-sized containers actually held the same volume of water. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 are keen writers. They have lots of good ideas about how to make a story more engaging and the many ways it can start or end. Marking is regular, and gives praise appropriately. It also gives guidance to help pupils improve, although this can be infrequent. Verbal guidance is given often within lessons. Those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well, as small group work and one-to-one help is targeted carefully and frequently.

Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have revised the way the school is managed and this has increased the pace of improvement. The changes in structure since September 2009 enable senior staff to keep a close eye on how well different classes make progress. All staff have a clear awareness of what their pupils should achieve, exchange that information regularly in pupil progress meetings, and senior leaders hold staff to account by evaluating the outcomes. Governors are involved in the improvement process by making regular visits to the school and through the weekly contact between the chair of governors and the headteacher. A 'steering group', formed with senior staff and governors, provides the necessary impetus and direction for improvement and aids the school's capacity to improve. The local authority's raising attainment plan has also been instrumental in focusing all staff on ensuring pupils make the required progress.

New management structures have been put in place to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are a top priority and are underpinned by robust routines for checking on welfare and provision. Records are updated routinely and follow latest best practice. Clear systems help any staff raise and record concerns about specific pupils and are now well established. These result in a systematic collection of information about any actions taken or support provided, and enable senior staff to keep a close



check on proceedings. Site security, particularly with major building work taking place, is monitored carefully and the new reception entrance area helps the school welcome, but also readily check, any visitors onto the premises.

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

Kevin Hodge  
Additional Inspector

