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Mr Ian Chester
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Chester

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 05 February 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information you provided before and during my visit. Please thank the staff, pupils, the representative of the local authority, the headteacher of Walton Lane Nursery School, and others, including the group of parents and carers, to whom I talked during the visit.

There have been changes in the school's intake since the inspection of 05 and 06 February 2008. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups has increased from 10% to around 20%. There are now more pupils of Pakistani heritage and more pupils have joined the school from Eastern European countries.

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

- improve achievement further in order to raise standards
- ensure that the more able pupils have the challenge they need in all lessons
- strengthen monitoring procedures to ensure that improvements are embedded and practice is consistent across all subjects and classes.

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.

Since the February 2008 inspection, two cohorts of Year 6 pupils have taken the national end of Key Stage 2 tests. The first cohort, in 2008, achieved results that were very low, lower than the government regards as the minimum acceptable. The 2009 cohort's results were much higher, the best pupils at the school have ever obtained, with 70% of pupils attaining the national expectations for 11-year-olds.

September 2009



This remains below the national average. However, many more pupils than is usual experience difficulties in learning or have social or emotional problems and, in this context, the results represent good achievement by pupils. The magnitude of the difficulties faced by many pupils in certain years was also reflected in the 2009 end of Key Stage 1 results. After an improvement in 2008, results in 2009 fell to well below average with a Year 2 cohort where almost one half of pupils experienced difficulties that adversely affected their learning. In the majority of lessons seen, pupils of all levels of ability made good or better progress. They enjoyed their lessons. Pupils of all ethnicities and abilities had a good attitude to learning and responded well to teachers' questions. Throughout the school, better progress is being made by pupils through improvements in teaching and learning and in the curriculum and there is considerable optimism that this will translate to higher standards.

The school's optimism is well grounded. The school's improvement has been recognised by the local authority. In the lessons seen, teaching was generally of good quality with some of the highest quality. The work prepared for children was interesting and the classrooms were bright. Pupils' achievements were celebrated fully. There were several commonly seen strengths of lessons that indicated teachers knew pupils and their needs well. For example, clear classroom routines were well established, giving pupils a strong sense of security. Management of behaviour was consistent. However, sanctions were rarely required. Teachers praised often, raising pupils' self-esteem and confidence, and pupils wanted to do well. Teachers planned their work very carefully to match the needs of pupils of different abilities and spelled out carefully what pupils were to learn. The spread of ability in each class is very wide so pupils do a lot of their work in groups on tasks tailored to their learning needs. A particularly strong feature of the teaching was the deployment of many well-briefed and effective adults to support the group work. All pupils were challenged, including the most able.

Many of the lessons observed were aimed at the teaching and learning of basic skills, as raising standards in English and mathematics remains the school's main priority. The school continues to give appropriate emphasis to reading, especially in Key Stage 1, and it has also embarked on a programme to develop and improve writing. Staff are putting considerable energy into developing a creative curriculum, one designed to motivate pupils and equip them with the skills and knowledge they will need for the future. In doing so staff are at the leading edge of several curriculum initiatives in the region.

Around 90 pupils, over one third of the school's roll, have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Although a proportion of these pupils' learning needs can be met in their entirety 'in-house', the greater proportion of pupils' needs can only be fully met through partnership working with external agencies. The school is very effective at working with families and other agencies to meet pupils' social, emotional and health needs. It has the trust and confidence of parents and carers, who find the staff approachable and informative. Up to 30 external agencies from the public and

voluntary sectors are involved in supporting pupils at any one time and the school plays a respected part in the local integrated services network.

Leadership and management are improved. The existing strengths of the school have been maintained; in particular the caring and nurturing ethos, which makes the school very popular with parents and carers. The systems for monitoring the progress of pupils that had been introduced at the time of the last inspection are now fully embedded. The headteacher and deputy headteacher make a strong senior team. They set challenging targets for pupils' attainment. They are now very well supported by enthusiastic and highly motivated middle leaders determined to raise standards and improve provision to that of the best. Because of the nature of the difficulties faced by many pupils, improvements in standards are hard won. However, pupils are making better progress from their starting points and the school is in a better position than it was at the time of the last inspection to sustain improvement.

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

Brian Padgett
Her Majesty's Inspector