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Jo Parkes
Ibstock Junior School
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Dear Mrs Parkes

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 28 January. Also, for the time you and Mrs Page gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please pass my thanks on to the members of the governing body for taking time to talk to me. I particularly enjoyed talking to the pupils and hearing about the changes they have appreciated over the past four terms.

Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes at the school. The majority of the governors are new. You were appointed as headteacher and took up your post in September 2008. Two new temporary teachers, including a newly qualified teacher, started at the school in September 2009. The number on roll in the special needs unit has fallen. Currently, there is one pupil who is catered for with specialist teaching sessions and some mainstream teaching. Two new classrooms have been developed from the former special unit accommodation. A quiet area and a climbing wall have been installed in the playground. New subject leaders for mathematics, literacy, information and communication technology, and science took up their roles in September 2009, working with colleagues in 'development teams'.

As a result of the inspection on 31 January – 1 February 2008, the school was asked to.

- Enable more pupils to attain standards above those expected for their ages, especially in mathematics.
- Improve overall effectiveness, monitoring and evaluation of the special unit.
- Ensure that governors carry out their roles effectively, particularly in ensuring the confidence of parents and in improving the special unit.



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.

The school has demonstrated clearly that it is capable of addressing the issues identified at the last inspection. The effectiveness of the school's work is evident in the improved progress seen in pupils' learning across the school. Attainment in the national assessments for pupils in Year 6 in 2009 was an improvement on 2008. English and mathematics are in line with the national average although science is still significantly below. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in English in Year 6 is in line with the national average. The school is fully aware that more work needs to be done to bring about similar improvements in mathematics and science. Senior leaders have put into place appropriate actions to challenge the more able pupils. The satisfactory progress seen in many pupils' books indicates that this strategy is starting to have a positive impact.

There is a strong sense of team work across the school. You have worked hard to establish an open style of leadership and shared understanding of what the school needs to improve. Joint mapping of pupils' progress and the identification of under-achievement, together with regular book scrutiny, has helped to identify shortcomings. These have been addressed systematically and proportionately. School self-evaluation is clear, accurate and ambitious. You have set challenging targets for the spring term. The Improving Schools initiative has been effective in providing a whole-school strategy to target-setting. You have used external consultants wisely to provide training for the whole staff. You have successfully established a consistent system of developmental marking. The helpful guidance pupils receive as a result is contributing to the improved progress seen in pupils' mathematics books throughout the school. This has been particularly effective in the induction of a new teacher in the lower school. Work to develop teaching in some classes has been less effective and so the progress made by pupils in these classes is improving more slowly. The school has rightly identified the need for opportunities for staff to observe the best practice in school and work with 'expert' teachers to develop their own practice so that more teaching is good, rather than satisfactory.

Leadership is effective and the increased sharing of responsibilities is helping to raise the expectations of all staff regarding pupils' capabilities. The newly formed development teams are enabling you to influence the impact of monitoring and evaluation activity across the school. More time is needed to embed target-setting to raise expectations and improve outcomes.

Governance has improved considerably. Governors are pro-active and visible around the school. They are actively monitoring curricular provision and during the visit two governors were in school to interview pupils about their learning and progress. In addition, governors have worked closely with the school to improve the confidence of parents. This is evident in the parental survey conducted in May 2009. Parents seen during the visit were positive about the new headteacher. A parent explained, 'She has made a real difference and is always available to talk. My children are really happy here'.

Over the past two years, the school has received an appropriate level of support from the local authority. In December 2009, following a local authority review, it was decided that the school no longer needed the level of intensive support because it had 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

Linda Rockey
Her Majesty's Inspector