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Mr Roger Walsh
Alburgh with Denton Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mr Walsh

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 29 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 staff and pupils for their help and courtesy.

Since the last inspection, the school has undergone a period of significant turbulence which has slowed its response to addressing the key weaknesses identified. However, it is now emerging strongly from this and is improving quickly. The new headteacher post is a joint one in which his time is shared with a larger nearby school. This collaborative arrangement allows the sharing of expertise and best practice. The new headteacher has quickly identified areas for improvement. Plans to address them are well advanced and are beginning to have a positive impact on quality of provision and on standards. The local authority has provided satisfactory support for the transition to a partnership arrangement, as well as facilitating arrangements with the partner school.

As a result of the inspection on 12–13 March 2008, the school was asked to:

- improve the monitoring of pupils' progress to trigger intervention
- ensure that pupils of all abilities are sufficiently challenged
- improve target setting and assessment, and
- improve self-evaluation so that it effectively drives improvement.

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



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Since the last inspection, the progress made by pupils has improved and is now around or a little above that expected nationally. In 2009, overall attainment was close to national averages when pupils left at the end of Year 6. Overall standards reached in mathematics and science have shown a marked improvement since 2008. The school's own monitoring data indicate encouraging further improvements for 2010. There is no significant difference between the progress made by boys and girls.

The school's monitoring of pupils' progress has improved. In class, teaching and support are carefully planned so that most pupils are catered for. This is done, for example, by sharing targets with pupils and making clear to them what they should do to improve. The most able pupils develop skills of independent learning well, but many others do not. The school recognises the need to further stimulate these skills in all pupils. Overall, the school manages mixed year group classes well. Assessments and homework are undertaken regularly and are well marked. However, the extent to which pupils evaluate their own and other's work and learning is under-developed.

The school is demonstrating good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement because of the wide extent and now good pace of changes made, together with their evident impact on improving standards. Collaboration with the partner school is beginning to enable the sharing of best practice. The self-evaluation process is largely accurate, and the school has a good view of its own weaknesses. The school improvement process is improving as action planning to tackle and monitor these weaknesses becomes more precise. For example, subject leaders are now taking much more of an active role in the development of their provision and in the implementation of progress monitoring.

The school has a good understanding of its own teaching. However, the lesson observation system places too much emphasis on monitoring what the teacher does rather than what pupils learn. Opportunities to evaluate standards in class are missed. The largely new governing body, and the new chair, are giving good support to the school improvement process. Increasingly, they are challenging the headteacher and the data and information they are given, but they recognise the need to further develop this role, particularly in the evaluation of school performance. The transition to a partnership is being well managed.

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

Ian Seath
Her Majesty's Inspector

