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Mrs Nicola McIntyre  
Headteacher  
Grove Junior School  
Turner Street  
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Dear Mrs McIntyre

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 15 June 2010, for the time you gave to the preparation at your school on 14 June 2010 and for the information you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils and staff for talking to me.

Since the last inspection the school has managed several maternity leaves.

As a result of the inspection on 26–27 June 2008, the school was asked to do the following.

- Raise standards in writing, particularly the breadth of pupils' vocabulary, and increase opportunities for them to write in subjects other than English.
- Increase the amount of good teaching and, in particular, raise teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to do, especially the more able.
- Develop the monitoring and evaluation role of subject leaders.
- Ensure that parents and carers understand the reasons for change and the positive effect these changes will have on their children's 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.

Pupils' achievement is improving and their progress is becoming more even across the school. The legacy of underachievement is being tackled well by the school's leaders and managers. This is reflected in Year 6 pupils' national test results in 2009, which were securely in line with the national average for the first time in five years. English results were particularly pleasing, with the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level being significantly above average and more pupils attaining the higher level. There has been some improvement to the proportions of pupils attaining the higher levels in all the subjects tested. However, improving performance at this level remains a priority to ensure that all pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment and that standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 are above the national average.

Evidence from the school's detailed tracking data for all year groups, and samples of pupils' writing across the school, show a marked improvement in their use of vocabulary. Examples abound in a wide range of genres and subjects. These include instructions for making Fabergé eggs in design and technology; character descriptions, letters and diary extracts written by famous historical figures; descriptions of habitat settings in science; and newspaper reports and explanations linked to work in geography and religious education. The notable improvement has stemmed from assiduous and systematic planning to tackle this issue in its entirety. Leaders have set clear expectations for teachers to plan and deliver a comprehensive range of writing opportunities in English and other subjects and to promote pupils' spoken and written vocabulary consistently. This was very evident in the sample of lessons seen during the monitoring inspection. Teachers have been given detailed guidance and support to promote writing across the curriculum. The resulting work from pupils is monitored regularly and rigorously, with teachers held accountable for pupils' attainment and the extent of their learning and progress.

Evidence from the lessons sampled and pupils' work reflects that teaching has improved. The gap between good and satisfactory teaching has narrowed and good qualities were noted in all lessons. Thoughtful planning ensures clearly differentiated work for all groups. A strength is the extent to which pupils are involved in the learning process, making choices about their work and evaluating their success against the learning objectives. In every lesson each pupil has the opportunity to take their learning to the next level. Pupils enjoy lessons and apply themselves well to tasks. They speak highly of their teachers and appreciate the help they provide both in lessons and through marking. This is consistently detailed and informs pupils well about their achievements and how to improve. Improvements to teaching have resulted from senior leaders' high expectations that all teaching should be good or better. To this end there is regular and rigorous monitoring. Where monitoring identifies that teaching and learning is less than good, clear improvement targets are set and support, such as coaching, is provided to enable teachers to meet them.

The role of subject leaders has moved on significantly since 2008. Now all subjects have identified leaders whose roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. Subject

leaders are now involved in monitoring and evaluation processes, which are clearly linked to their impact on improving the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils. Subject leaders produce detailed action plans, lead staff development, inform and involve link governors and are accountable to the senior leadership team, for example about how they use their subject leadership time. The subject leaders for English and mathematics have established close and productive links with the feeder infant schools, for example to support the moderation of assessments of pupils.

The school has done much to engage parents and carers, and communication with them is greatly improved. A recent survey of their views shows that the overwhelming majority are very happy with the way the school is led and managed.

Reports from the regular visits of the School Improvement Partner reflect the competency and strength of the school's leadership team. As such, the local authority decided that the school did not require any additional support to address the recommendations for improvement made by the 2008 inspection.

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

Margot D'Arcy  
Additional Inspector