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Mr Simon Norton
Hazel Slade Primary School
Cannock Wood Street
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Staffordshire
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Dear Mr Norton

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Thursday 25 February 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 chair of governors, the local authority officer, the staff and the pupils.

Since the last inspection, the number of pupils on roll has fallen from 115 to 97. To accommodate this, the number of classes has been reduced and there are now fewer teachers employed by the school.

As a result of the inspection on 27 February 2008, the school was asked to:

- establish clear leadership in mathematics to drive forward improvement at the pace required
- raise teachers' expectations and increase the pace of work and challenge in the activities set for the more-able pupils, particularly in mathematics, so that standards are lifted
- make better use of target setting in mathematics to inform pupils' next steps in learning and to involve them in evaluating how well they are doing
- review approaches to marking, draw on the pockets of best practice to identify and target improvement as well as encourage good progress.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made:

inadequate progress in making improvements and

inadequate progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.



Since the last inspection, pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 has declined significantly. The 2009 end of Key Stage 2 test results show that pupils' attainment was exceptionally low in English, mathematics and science. Only 19% of pupils attained the higher level 5 in mathematics and 13% of pupils attained this level in English. Although pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 1 in reading has remained broadly average over recent years, the 2009 teacher assessments showed that pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics had declined from the time of the last inspection.

Over the past two years, the school's tracking information shows that there were some improvements made to pupils' progress in Years 5 and 6 in writing and mathematics. However, because of the poor progress made in Years 3 and 4, pupils' progress overall in Key Stage 2 has declined. Value-added measures show that inadequate progress was made by the pupils who left the school in 2009. Progress made by pupils in mathematics was broadly the same as that at the time of the last inspection.

Since the start of the current school year, the headteacher has strongly led a new approach to the teaching of mathematics throughout the school. Mathematics lessons are no longer than fifteen minutes and all pupils are taught the subject three times each day. In most of these short mathematics lessons, work given to pupils is well matched to their needs and they are led effectively through the small steps which ensure effective learning. Consequently, although lesson observations showed that there is still lack of challenge for the more-able pupils in some classes, achievement in mathematics is now beginning to rise. Pupils say that they prefer the shorter and more frequent lessons, and feel that they are now learning much more effectively. Despite this recent successful development, improvements in mathematics since the last inspection have been too slow and, consequently, the school has not demonstrated a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Observations during the inspection, the school's own monitoring records and local authority reports show that in lessons other than mathematics, there is some good teaching, but too much remains no better than satisfactory. The aspects of teaching which account for the improved rate of progress in mathematics are not yet embedded in all lessons. Consequently, the pace of learning is sometimes too slow, pupils are not sufficiently guided through the learning steps and expectations are not high enough, especially for the more-able pupils.

The school has recently revised its policy for marking of pupils' work and there are several examples of good-quality marking which give pupils helpful guidance of how to improve their work. However, this remains inconsistent. Although pupils' next learning steps in mathematics are well planned and, in some lessons, they are encouraged to evaluate their own learning, very few know their targets for improvement.

The headteacher values the helpful support provided by the local authority. Nevertheless, the impact of this on raising pupils' achievement since the last inspection is inadequate.

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

Roy Bowers
Her Majesty's Inspector