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Mrs Deborah Boshier
Beech Hill Community Primary School
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Dear Mrs Boshier

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school with Mrs Maitland on 12 March 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during our visit. Please also pass on our thanks to the pupils, especially those we met and talked to.

Since the last inspection there have been significant changes to the senior leadership team, including a change of headteacher. In addition, the leadership structure has changed with more responsibilities devolved to a range of subject and year leadership teams. The school now has all of its pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly Pakistani and Bangladeshi.

As a result of the inspection on 11 March 2008, the school was asked to raise standards in English, mathematics and science, improve teaching strategies so they include more practical and visual strategies and make better use of technology, and develop a curriculum that provides more opportunities for studying topics in greater depth and that match pupils' interests.

Having considered all the evidence we are 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.



Standards in English, mathematics and science have risen steadily since the last inspection. The school has been especially successful in raising standards in reading and writing and these are now broadly in line with those expected. This represents some excellent progress given the pupils' starting points, their very low attainment on entry and the high proportion from families whose home language is not English with English as an additional language.

Standards in mathematics and science remain significantly below average but have still risen since the last inspection and are continuing to rise. The school's data shows that, in mathematics, the Year 6 pupils are currently closer to the expected level than they have been in the past. This represents good improvement, especially in developing pupils' vocabulary and their understanding of the technical language, as these have been the main weaknesses in the past.

All of the pupils are achieving well and making good progress. This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has introduced a wider range of intervention strategies, including one-to-one tuition. These are evaluated closely and pupils' progress is tracked, showing clearly that many make better progress than that expected. The school also recognised weaknesses in the achievement of many of the girls. They have worked hard to ensure that boys do not dominate in lessons and many questions are focused on drawing out girls' answers and encouraging them to take a full part in lessons.

The progress has improved since the last inspection because of the changes made to the quality of teaching and learning, and to the curriculum. The teaching observed during this inspection was good with none that was inadequate. Actions taken to improve the teaching have successfully addressed the issue raised at the last inspection. Teachers are clearly using more practical activities to support learning. In one lesson, pupils were able to design and make a chair suitable for a Tudor monarch. In a science lesson, pupils investigated evaporation and condensation through some effective experimentation. In addition, good visual learning occurred through the use of cold drinks from a refrigerator and a pupil's breath on the window.

Some very effective visual strategies are used in teaching English. In Year 6, for example, pupils linked work developing some very creative similes to photographs of mountains in their families' home countries, and to the inspiration provided by a mock up camp fire. In addition the teachers used music to create an appropriate mood. In mathematics lessons the use of practical activities supports pupils' learning well, consolidating concepts such as three dimensional shapes. The use of information and communication technology is yet to be as fully developed but upcoming improvements to the school's resources should make this easier to achieve in the future.

Since the last inspection the school has developed some effective cross curricular links. This curriculum work has been well supported by training and the use of expertise, especially that of some advanced skills teachers. The pupils' views on the curriculum have also been taken into account through the school council and through meetings held by the headteacher with each class. The school provides a very good range of after school clubs, visits and visitors and other enrichment activities. These allow pupils to develop many of their interests and skills to a higher level. Another good innovation has been 'Talk Mondays' when the focus in all of the lessons is strongly on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills.

The school has been well supported by the local authority and other outside agencies since the last inspection. Good links remain, especially in dealing with attendance issues, and with pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The improvements made since the last inspection clearly show an improved capacity to sustain further improvement and represent good progress in a number of recent initiatives.

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

Geof Timms

Additional Inspector