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Mrs Josephine Simmons
The Meadows Primary School
Calder Road
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Dear Mrs Simmons

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 20 May 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to the Chair of Governors, staff, the local authority representative and the groups of pupils who gave up some of their lunchtime to meet with me.

There have been a large number of changes to the school's context since the previous inspection in June 2008. The entire school has relocated into its new purpose-built accommodation. Six teachers have left and five replacement teachers have been appointed; there is one newly qualified teacher currently employed. A similar number of teaching assistants have left and joined the school. As a consequence, all of the staff working within the Reception classes have changed. The pre-school is no longer separately registered and is now deemed to be a nursery class as part of the school's Early Years Foundation Stage provision for pupils aged 3 to 5 years.

As a result of the inspection in June 2008, the school was asked to:

- match learning more closely to pupils' needs and abilities, especially the most able and those with special gifts and talents
- provide more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills in other subjects
- set clear direction for developments within the Early Years Foundation Stage, focusing on achievement, personal development and well-being.

Having considered all of 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.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Since the previous inspection, pupils' attainment has varied and, in some areas, has declined. That said, there is evidence that attainment and progress across most of the school is improving. Although attainment at the end of Year 2 has continued to be broadly average, the attainment of boys is below girls and, in 2009, was below average for boys in writing. Attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2009 remained well below average. This was primarily because the proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 declined and was below the government's floor target and the school did not meet its agreed targets. Inspection evidence and the school's own data indicate that attainment across the school is rising. Attainment in the current Year 5 and 6 groups is higher than in 2009 and these pupils are on track to reach standards that will be above the government floor target in both English and mathematics. The most notable success of the school has been in improving rates of progress in English, specifically reading. This is reflected in the fact that the progress made by the Year 6 group in 2009 was particularly strong and placed the school in the top 20% of schools for value added in English. However, in mathematics and science, the school remained in the lowest 10% of all schools nationally; indicating that there is still much work to do. Although there are some pupils who are making expected or better progress, particularly as a result of extra support, there remain a significant minority of pupils who are not making the progress that they should be. Across the school, progress is better in reading than mathematics, and girls make better gains than boys in writing. The school has correctly identified mathematics and boys' writing as areas for ongoing improvement.

The teaching sampled during the inspection demonstrated that teachers are planning activities to more closely match the needs of pupils. The majority of the observed teaching was good and none was less than satisfactory. The use of a common planning format ensures that all teachers routinely plan for at least three ability levels, linked to National Curriculum levels, within literacy and numeracy lessons. Clear learning intentions and success criteria are common features. The lessons that were observed confirm that these plans are effectively being translated into lessons where pupils' differing learning needs are being met. However, on at least one occasion during the visit, the work was not finely matched to the exact needs of lower ability pupils. Although all lessons identify challenging activities for the most able pupils, the expectations of some of these pupils do not ensure that they achieve as much as they could. The deployment of teaching assistants has improved since the last inspection and observations confirm that much of their work within classrooms and when working with individuals and small groups is helping to improve learning and progress. The marking of work has improved and is mostly done regularly. In some of the examples seen, it routinely evaluated pupils' success at achieving the desired learning and often identified ways for pupils to improve their work. However, some pupils stated that they do not always read or take notice of their teachers' comments.

There are now more planned opportunities for pupils to practise their English, mathematics and ICT skills in a range of other subjects. For example, there is evidence that physical education has been used to help pupils develop their counting



skills. There are many examples of improvements in the use of ICT across the curriculum with, for example, pupils producing multimedia presentations.

At the time of the last inspection, the Early Years Foundation Stage was evaluated as a reception class; now the school provides a nursery class for children aged three to four in addition to the reception classes for pupils aged up to five. The whole of this is provided as part of the school's activities. A result of this change is that the school does not now comply with the staffing and qualifications ratios as outlined in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Although this situation is not solely of the leadership's making and came about because of inaccurate advice it does need to be addressed. The move to the new building has contributed to the significant improvement in the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Relationships are a strength, and improved leadership has resulted in a well resourced and stimulating learning environment. Although there are many planned, adult-led activities, there are also many opportunities for pupils to choose interesting learning activities which promote their independence, social and language skills. That said, there is some variance in the quality of provision between the nursery and the reception classes. For example, in the reception classes, there is better provision for children to engage in writing activities. Children are clear about daily routines and expectations. However, there is scope to further raise the expectations of the most able and those who are coming to the end of their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The school has made satisfactory progress in developing its capacity for further improvement. The quality of teaching is evaluated soundly and improvements to the quality of teaching demonstrate that improvements are being made. There is evidence that school leaders know the work of the school and they have accurately identified the most important areas for improvement. Appropriate plans are in place and regular monitoring is ensuring that the impact of the school's work is checked. The governing body continues to know and value the work of the school and is aware of where most improvement is needed. Although there have been improvements to the type and quality of information provided to the governing body by senior leaders, there is scope to improve this further. For example, subject leaders do not report to governors on attainment or progress across the school and the headteacher's regular reports do not always reflect the full range of information she has available from monitoring the progress of pupils. This inspection was able to confirm that appropriate actions are being taken and these are beginning to improve the progress of pupils.

The school engages effectively with the local authority, which has provided appropriate support. This visit included a check on the school's safeguarding procedures by scrutinising the single central record and found this to be secure.

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



Amraz Ali
Her Majesty's Inspector

