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Mr Trevor Hutchinson
Headteacher
Ayresome Primary School
Worcester Street
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Dear Mr Hutchinson

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 17 June 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also thank the teachers and pupils who gave up their time to talk to me.

Since the last inspection there have been some staff changes with five staff leaving the school and new staff appointments. Senior leaders have reorganised the management structure so that middle leaders have new roles and responsibilities and are fully involved in monitoring the work of the school. A new curriculum organisation has been established and this has resulted in changes to the way pupils are taught in the classroom across the school. There has also been an influx of pupils who do not speak English from Eastern Europe.

As a result of the inspection on 25 and 26 June 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science
- improve the quality of teaching and learning
- raise teachers' expectations to ensure all pupils are challenged to achieve the best they can
- ensure the good data and information the school holds about its performance are effectively used to evaluate the impact of the work of the school and inform future priorities.

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.

Teachers have responded very positively to the issues identified in the last inspection in June 2008. The areas for improvement form the basis of many positive changes that have taken place over the last two years. The school as a whole has focused on raising pupils' progress in lessons and in improving teaching and learning for all pupils through developing a creative curriculum model. As a result of the changed curriculum, attainment in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved and is narrowing the gap between boys' and girls' attainment. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is rising rapidly to nearer national expectations especially in writing at the higher levels; and at the end of Key Stage 2, attainment has risen dramatically in English and mathematics. This represents much improved progress for these pupils from very low starting points. The school's tracking data show that the majority of pupils are working nearer age-related expectations throughout the school and pupils who have special educational needs, or who are at the early stages of learning to speak English are very well supported and are making more rapid progress.

Teachers are accurately assessing pupils' attainment at regular intervals and using this data more effectively to plan learning for the different abilities in their classes. This use of data is also leading to very well targeted intervention for identified pupils, especially those with little or no spoken English. This is accelerating their progress and enabling them to better access learning in the classroom. A pupil who had joined the school only days previously with no spoken English was able to access mathematics tasks alongside another pupil who could interpret the task in his own language. A dedicated and experienced team of staff carry out these interventions alongside one-to-one tuition and in partnership with class teachers. The impact of this model has been identified as excellent practice within the local authority and the wider community as it involves working very closely with the pupils but also close involvement with their families.

In lessons observed, the majority of teaching seen was good. Lessons were a buzz of activity with pupils working in small groups; sometimes with the class teacher and often independently or with other adults. Pupils were clear about what they were learning and were actively engaged throughout the lesson. Teachers set a good pace in most lessons and convey high expectations of the pupils. As a consequence, behaviour is good and pupils are more excited about their learning. They told the inspector that they are responsible for their own learning and know what they need to do to improve. Activities set are well matched to different pupils' abilities and this helps pupils make good progress because they are personalised to pupils' individual targets for improvement.

In the best lessons observed, excellent links were made between different curriculum areas. The whole school is following a World Cup theme with each class being allocated a different team. Pupils are eagerly finding out about their country

and the meaningful links are giving pupils a purpose for the learning. In one lesson for lower Key Stage 2 pupils, one group investigated which materials would make the best football strips. Each pair within the group had planned a different investigation and they were able to carry out accurate measurements independently. In another class, a group of pupils were investigating which foods were the healthiest by measuring the fat content in Mexican foods. These activities linked very well to the writing, reading and geography activities that other groups were studying and pupils showed much improved levels of progress, engagement and enjoyment.

The school has appointed a teaching and learning coordinator who works closely with staff who have identified areas they would like to improve. The coordinator works alongside teachers in a mentoring and coaching model leading to improvements in practice. Teachers welcome this initiative.

The reorganised management structure involves all staff working together in groups which contain teachers from each year group across the school. This has been instrumental in raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. In these meetings staff work together to monitor planning, pupils work in books and assessed work, to ensure accuracy. Procedures for assessing pupils' work are well embedded throughout the school and teachers can talk eloquently about the attainment and progress of pupils in their classes. Teachers say they feel empowered and that this use of data is leading to identifying areas for improvement and future priorities. The current school improvement plan is detailed and covers all areas of the school's work. However, there has been slower progress in identifying specific targets for improvement which are measurable and in using these targets to focus the monitoring that is taking place across the school.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work closely together to drive improvement. They have developed an experienced team of senior managers who welcome change and together they are not afraid to be innovative in their drive to improve the school. There have been notable improvements in pupils' attainment and progress; the accountability of staff through their involvement in monitoring the school's work; the involvement of the governing body through the raising achievement committee; curriculum organisation and planning and in improving the quality of teaching. This has raised the expectations of staff and pupils and strengthened the school's capacity to sustain these improvements.

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

Joy Frost
Her Majesty's Inspector