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19 July 2010

Mr Alan Jenner
Mulberry Primary School
Parkhurst Road
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Dear Mr Jenner

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 July 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please extend my thanks to the pupils and to the chair of the governing body, as well as the representative from the local authority (LA) who gave time to speak to me.

As a result of the inspection on 13–15 July 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise pupils' standards in their speech and language to help improve their progress in all subjects
- analyse the data on pupils' progress more rigorously to identify the impact that support strategies are having on pupils' achievement
- improve the consistency of teaching to be good or better across the school.

Having considered all 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.

Inspection and school evidence points to children's knowledge and skill levels on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage as being well below those usually expected. Overall, in 2009, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 results demonstrate that pupils attained standards that are well below national expectations. Few pupils attained the higher national curriculum levels. However, there is a clear trend of improvement. Attainment seen in lessons, school data and pupils' books indicate improvements in attainment, particularly in Key Stage 2. Progress has accelerated in some year groups since the last inspection because there have been improvements to the consistency of teaching and learning overall. However, there is still more to do to bridge the gap between pupils' very low attainment and that expected nationally.



This is because the pace of improving teaching and learning to become good or better remains a key area for further development. In order to address the significant gaps in pupils' learning and ensure pupils make the progress of which they are capable, teaching still needs to be of a higher quality. Nonetheless, satisfactory improvements have been made in moving the quality of provision on since the last inspection.

Local authority consultants have been working alongside teachers to provide additional support. As a result, in the better lessons, teachers use assessment information with increasing expertise to pitch work to the correct level for different groups; they target questioning well and enhance pupils' speaking and listening skills through the effective use of talk partners. For example, pupils in Year 1 eagerly participated in observing and drawing a variety of flowers. They were able to use key vocabulary, modelled by the teacher, in their discussions. In the less effective lessons, teachers do not always introduce lesson objectives successfully and data are not used to plan lessons that effectively tailor teaching in order to meet the wide ability range in each lesson. Few opportunities are given to enable pupils to assess their work using their targets or other criteria.

Provision and outcomes within the Early Years Foundation Stage are showing slower signs of improvement. Children have access to a range of appropriate learning resources indoors; this is particularly the case in the Nursery class. The outdoor space is restricted in the Nursery class but despite this it is clean, welcoming and provides an exciting and often absorbing resource for children to develop their skills and understanding. Outdoor provision for the Reception classes is inadequate. Activities in the Reception classes are thoughtfully planned, but opportunities to develop children's language through talk are missed because children work independently for too long without sufficient support from adults or because teaching assistants do not always use focused questions in order to develop children's speaking and listening skills. A lack of leadership capacity and teaching that is satisfactory are a barrier to the rapid progress necessary to improve provision and the outcomes for children.

Staff working with pupils who have autistic spectrum disorders, in the specialist centre known in the school as the 'provision', are well trained. They are very responsive to pupils' needs and provide an effective and consistent approach, which is having a very positive effect on pupils' ability to focus and concentrate on the practical tasks that are planned for them.

Overall, pupils' personal development is good, with clear strengths in moral and social aspects. Pupils get on well together at work and play. They are happy to be at school and they respond appropriately to learning opportunities provided by their teachers, with positive attitudes and good behaviour. The school continues to work hard to improve attendance. Robust systems are in place for identifying and tackling low attendance. Such measures include giving prizes in assembly and working tirelessly with the Educational Welfare Officer.



Since the last inspection, rigorous procedures have been implemented for assessing pupils and tracking their progress. For example, termly meetings are held between teachers and senior leaders to check on individual pupils' progress, to inform decisions regarding intervention groups and to address underachievement in specific areas. The development of these clear systems for monitoring pupils' progress, together with well-focused support to meet the needs of pupils, is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress.

The headteacher has established a clear direction and set high expectations for the school community. He is a strong presence in the school and his clear vision inspires commitment from members of the school community. There is a strong sense of energy and enthusiasm within the school. Senior leaders have a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. For example, they know the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning. However, monitoring sometimes lacks rigour and does not sufficiently evaluate the impact of all the school's work on teaching, learning and the progress the pupils are making, and individual teachers are not held accountable for the progress and attainment of the pupils in their class. The challenge for the school now is to ensure the rate of progress seen on this visit is built upon and moved to good.

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

Kekshan Salaria
Her Majesty's Inspector

