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Mr John McKie
Headteacher
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Dear Mr McKie

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 2 March 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Also, thank you to the pupils, the chair of governors and the local authority advisor for speaking with me which was most helpful.

Since the last inspection there have been several staff changes. The senior leadership team now have redefined roles and responsibilities. These changes have mainly taken place in the last 12 months. Three new teachers have been appointed in the current academic Year, including an advanced skills teacher who is in post for the spring and summer terms using funding from the Manchester Challenge and with the support of the local authority. The local authority provides a consultant for approximately 10 days each term to support the school's improvement in mathematics, literacy and attendance. The Manchester Challenge advisor was appointed to monitor the school's progress from September 2009. A new chair was appointed to the governing body in September 2009 and the governors established a new strategic monitoring committee to focus on raising standards at the start of the school year.

As a result of the inspection on 10–11 March 2008, the school was asked to.

- Raise standards and achievement in English.
- Ensure that the quality of teaching is at least good throughout the school and in all subjects.
- Ensure greater rigour in using data from assessment and checking on the quality of lessons to identify exactly what is needed to improve pupils' progress, especially in literacy.

- Improve attendance.

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.

The school responded to the last inspection by undertaking extensive reviews and evaluations of staffing, roles and responsibilities and the grouping of pupils for learning in the basic skills. It has put into place several initiatives aimed at raising standards, such as setting pupils for English. Many of these actions were too slow to begin and have only recently begun to impact on pupils' progress and achievement. The rate of improvement is accelerating and the capacity for sustained improvement is growing as the additional support from the local authority and Manchester Challenge becomes embedded. The leadership now has a secure view of the key areas for school improvement. Pupils speak positively about the school and say it is improving. Overall, however, the school has not improved sufficiently since it was last inspected nor is it demonstrating a better capacity to improve.

The provisional results of the pupils' 2009 Year 6 national tests show that over the last three years overall standards have declined and are significantly below those found nationally. Standards in English have remained broadly as they were and are below average. Standards in mathematics and science have declined and are below average. The contextualised value added measures show no overall improvement in the progress made by pupils. There is a small improvement in the progress made in English and in 2009 this was similar to that found nationally. Pupils' progress in science and mathematics has declined. Progress in mathematics is significantly below average. There has been no improvement in the progress made by boys and girls or for pupils classified as School Action Plus or with a statement of special educational need. The percentage of pupils gaining Level 4 or better in English and/or mathematics is below the government's national floor targets. Pupils' attainment in Key Stage 1 assessments has risen significantly since the last inspection and has been steadily rising over the last four years.

Although the quality of teaching is improving and there are a greater proportion of good lessons than at the time of the last inspection, the consistency of good teaching is not yet strong enough to ensure that pupils make good progress. Recent improvements are showing signs of increasing the rate at which pupils learn, but this has not been sufficiently sustained to impact on pupils' attainment in national tests and assessments. Improvements to teachers' planning now ensure that pupils' learning is clearly identified taking into account the data from assessments. Relationships between staff and pupils continue to be warm and respectful. Classrooms are attractively displayed and help to motivate pupils to learn. Targets are set for pupils' learning which are suitably challenging. Marking of pupils' work has improved. It is often helpful and identifies the next step in pupils' learning. However, whilst teachers are developing a range of strategies to advance the rate of

pupils' progress in lessons, progress varies too much. This is because the quality of teaching is still not consistently good throughout the school. In some lessons, not enough time is used to extend and advance learning because too much emphasis is given to consolidating or reinforcing existing knowledge. Although pupils are regularly given opportunities to discuss their learning with each other, this is frequently cut short and there is insufficient time for ideas to be shared and explored.

The leadership's monitoring of the quality of teaching is improving and increasing, but it places insufficient emphasis on the rate of pupils' progress in lessons. Observations often evaluate teaching without enough regard to the amount of progress in new learning which was made. Consequently, the school's evaluation of the quality of teaching is out of line with the rate of progress made by pupils over time. The headteacher has ensured that the school now has a tracking system in place to monitor the attainment of pupils against the targets which the school sets. This provides clear evidence that pupils are currently on track to achieve these targets this year. Even so, the rate of progress needed to achieve the targets is only the same as seen at the last inspection and this is insufficient to raise attainment above the levels found at the last inspection. The tracking system is not yet used to rigorously monitor the progress of different classes, groups or cohorts of pupils.

The absence rates of pupils are not improving despite the considerable efforts of the school. They remain below average and of concern. The school attendance officer has put in place a range of strategies which provides incentives such as free trips and prizes. The school also uses deterrents, including where appropriate, prosecutions through the courts. A first day response system is used through text messaging, which is followed up by letters and home visits. The pupils speak favourably about the school's encouragement of good attendance and feel it is working. The school recognises that improvements to the quality of lessons, is a key strategy for improving attendance.

Support for the school from the local authority is good. The impact of the school improvement officer's work is seen in the improvement to the school's self-evaluation which accurately reflects the school's strengths and weaknesses. The consultancy support is helping to build middle leadership capacity and to improve the provision for mathematics and literacy. The authority gives good advice to the governors' strategic committee.

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
John Coleman
Her Majesty's Inspector