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Mrs Sue Doyle
Headteacher
Heygreen Community Primary School
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Dear Mrs Doyle

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Heygreen Community Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 22 September 2010 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the two governors and the previous and present School Improvement Partners for the time they gave to meet with me during the inspection.

Since the last inspection staffing has remained stable and their roles and responsibilities have been reviewed. A new deputy headteacher took up the post at the start of the autumn term. Significant changes have taken place on the governing body, with a change in the position of Chair of the Governing Body and a high proportion of new members.

As a result of the inspection on 13-14 January 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Fluctuations in overall attainment percentages since 2008 and 2009 may be treated with caution due to changes in the number of pupils in those cohorts. Nevertheless, the 2010 unvalidated Key Stage 2 test results do show a clear improvement in the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 in mathematics. Although the number achieving the higher Level 5 also rose slightly, girls were not represented in this group. The school is aware that securing further improvement in mathematics will require remedying gaps in some pupils' knowledge and understanding so that

their progress is not hindered by previous underachievement. It is appropriate that mathematics is a high priority in the school's and local authority's action plans for the coming months, and that a senior leader will be responsible for managing these developments.

The impact of actions taken to raise girls' attainment, while not fully evident in national tests or assessments, is beginning to be seen in the day-to-day work of the school. During this inspection almost every class was observed and no significant differences were noted in the achievement or involvement of girls in lessons across the school. Teachers encouraged and expected contributions to be made by both girls and boys and a more consistent level of challenge was provided for all groups of learners. The school's own evaluations of the quality of teaching are increasingly accurate and more focused on progress and learning than was the case previously. They also provide evidence of improved equality of opportunity for all pupils. For example, senior leaders' recent observations in upper Key Stage 2 showed the positive impact of work to raise girls' aspirations. This work has included a project in partnership with pupils and staff at a local independent school for girls.

Lessons observed by the inspector confirmed that teachers are committed to developing and improving their practice. A common feature of most lessons was the amount of thought the teacher had given to planning a range of interesting activities, often providing stimulating resources and challenges to engage pupils and make learning more effective. Teachers are improving their use of open questioning to promote pupils' thinking and understanding. As teachers develop their skills in using assessment for learning, they are aware that targeted questioning is also necessary to help speed the rate of progress and understanding for individual pupils.

Pupils' development of workplace skills is improving not only as a result of better teaching and learning but also by significant improvements in pupils' attendance. From an overall figure of less than 79% in the academic year 2008/09, attendance in 2009/10 rose to 92.9%, identifying the school as one of the 'most improved' in the local authority in terms of attendance. A particularly challenging target of 95% has been set for the current year and the school works closely with families, education welfare staff and outside agencies to continue to improve this important aspect of pupils' preparation for their future lives.

The school has updated some of its resources for information and communication technology (ICT) and a member of the leadership team has taken on responsibility for planning actions and monitoring the school's provision and outcomes in this area. Recent training has increased teachers' confidence in delivering the ICT curriculum. The use of ICT by pupils in lessons across a number of subjects is improving, although outcomes are variable due to the previous lack of regular opportunities for them to develop basic computer skills. Teachers' use of interactive whiteboard technology to enhance lessons is developing well.

The school's actions to improve pupils' writing skills are already showing positive results, for example, in the 2010 Key Stage 2 tests when attainment in writing rose

to within a few percentage points of the national average. Senior leaders' sampling of pupils' work in books has identified improvements in teachers' use of marking to guide pupils to improve. There is a commitment to ensure that pupils are provided with a clear purpose for their writing, to improve the stimulus and motivation to write. The school is aware of the need for writing, along with speaking and listening, to remain key priorities in improving pupils' basic skills and future opportunities.

Pupils are now provided with a wider range of opportunities through which to raise their awareness of different cultures. This is beginning to improve their understanding of different countries and of people from other backgrounds or with experiences different to their own. The school has developed a number of links with other schools locally, nationally and globally. Cross-curricular work and themed days contribute to improvements in pupils' ability to think and ask questions about a variety of issues. For example, in the summer term a number of volunteers came into school to talk to pupils and to answer their prepared questions about different occupations and professions. Visits by all classes to various places of worship in the local area are followed up by discussions and questionnaires for pupils, to improve their understanding of different faiths. Religious education provision is planned and monitored more carefully. An impressive portfolio of evidence is maintained by the school to show the improving impact of its work on pupils' cultural development.

The local authority's statement of action has been evaluated and is fit for purpose. Prior to the last inspection, a school improvement project group was already established at the school as part of the authority's intervention strategy. The governing body is represented on this group. The local authority has secured the services of an additional governor, who has significant expertise in supporting school improvement and is now a member of the governors' monitoring committee. Governors have embarked on a rigorous training programme to ensure they are better equipped to support and monitor the school's progress and hold the leadership team to account.

An experienced senior leader from a neighbouring school was seconded to Heygreen during the summer term as a temporary assistant headteacher prior to the arrival of the new deputy headteacher. The leadership team is making good use of relevant external consultancy and advice with the confidence to be selective about this as improvements gather pace and less support is needed. Leaders, governors and teaching and support staff are working together as a team and demonstrate clear commitment to improving outcomes for all pupils.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Marguerite Murphy
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2010

- Raise girls' attainment in each class and raise the attainment of all pupils in mathematics by:
 - sharpening the focus of all leaders and managers on pupils' progress and learning
 - improving the quality of activities so that they are more challenging and aimed at increasing pupils' thinking and understanding.
- Improve pupils' development of workplace skills by:
 - increasing attendance in each class to be at least in line with the national average
 - increasing pupils' skills and use of information and communication technology in lessons
 - raise further pupils' attainment in writing.
- Increase pupils' understanding of different cultures by:
 - identifying ways in which they learn from and interact with people from different backgrounds and walks of life which are different to their own
 - developing a fuller understanding about different countries.