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Mrs L Counsell
Headteacher
Meredith Infant School
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Dear Mrs Counsell

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 29 September 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please thank the staff and pupils who also contributed to the inspection.

Since the time of the last inspection there have been a number of changes at the school. Nine members of staff have left and ten new staff have been appointed. Five members of staff have gone on maternity leave and the school has provided cover for their absence. There have been changes to the membership of the senior leadership team. The new deputy headteacher has been in post since September 2009 and has become the inclusion manager. This month the school elected a new Chair for the Governing Body.

The number of pupils who attend the school has significantly increased and the school has gained an additional class this year. There has also been a steady rise in the proportion of pupils joining the school who are of Eastern European heritage.

As a result of the inspection on 15 and 16 January 2009, the school was asked to bring about improvements in three main areas.

- Raise standards and accelerate pupils' achievement, particularly in writing.
- Ensure that all lessons are planned so that pupils understand what they have to do and are fully challenged.
- Improve attendance and punctuality by raising parents' awareness of the school's high expectations.



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.

Although attainment at the end of Year 2 is rising, pupils are not making sufficient gains in their learning given the good start and the progress they make in Reception. There are also too few pupils attaining the higher Level 3 in writing and mathematics. The best rate of progress being made in Key Stage 1 is in reading and the least is in writing. Girls continue to do better than boys, but the school is successfully narrowing the gender gap. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are making better progress than their peers by the end of Key Stage 1. Those learning to speak English are making better progress than their peers in reading and mathematics but progressing less well in their writing. Pupils with special educational needs and /or disabilities do not achieve as well as similar groups of pupils nationally, but are generally progressing at a similar rate as most of the other pupils in the school. There is effective additional support for pupils with additional learning needs; however, the poor attendance of some of these pupils is significantly impeding their learning and progress.

When the behaviour of pupils is less than good, it is usually because weak teaching fails to engage their interest and meet their needs. Teaching and support staff form positive relationships with pupils and this helps pupils to feel confident to try out new learning and contribute to class discussions. Pupils generally understand what is expected of them, they enjoy doing practical activities and work well together. However, the quality of teaching and learning is not strong enough to help accelerate progress in those areas most in need of improvement. Weaknesses in teaching are characterised by missed opportunities for maximising learning by using a more integrated curriculum. Teachers make insufficient use of assessment strategies during and after lessons, and pupils at times sit passively for too long while teachers talk at length. As a result, the pace of learning is too slow, expectations are too low and too many pupils, particularly the more able, make insufficient progress. Teachers' knowledge of how to teach letters and sounds is weak; consequently pupils' understanding of how to apply their phonological skills is not secure and this further slows their ability to develop their basic writing skills. Although the quality of teachers' planning is generally satisfactory, lessons do not always reflect what has been planned, such as the teaching of key words.

The school works well with parents to improve levels of attendance and punctuality. As a result, there has been a significant reduction in the proportion of pupils who are persistent absentees. However, there are still too many pupils who are not brought to school when they should be, and this is compromising their education. Although more pupils now arrive on time for the start of the school day, there are still too many who are brought to school late, and therefore miss the first part of their lessons.

The school has re-established a senior leadership team and there is a clear vision for the future which is reflected in the school development plan. However, action plans for different subjects are generally weak. Most do not make reference to different or targeted groups of pupils; they do not incorporate the school's key priorities or specify how rates of progress or success will be measured. Subject leaders provide position statements for their area of responsibility but do not report on progress and standards. This together with the high turn over of staff as well as the reluctance of some to adhere to school policies and agreed practice is further compromising the school's capacity to secure sustained improvements. The role of too many governors as well as those with subject responsibility remains largely underdeveloped. As a result, there is still an over reliance on too few to drive and embed improvements in the school. Although the school has systems in place to ensure pupils are kept safe, policies and practice are not reviewed or monitored frequently or rigorously enough.

Pupils have benefitted from the support provided to the school by the education welfare officer, but there is still more to be done to help improve rates of attendance to an acceptable level. The support and challenge provided to the senior management team by their School Improvement Partner has ensured that senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

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

Gehane Gordelier
Her Majesty's Inspector

