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Mrs Hazel Palmer
Headteacher
Grange Community Primary School
Brindley Avenue
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Dear Mrs Palmer

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Grange Community Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff, pupils and representatives of the governing body gave when I inspected your school on 30 September 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

Since the previous inspection there have been several changes to staffing and to the senior leadership team. A new headteacher took up post in January 2010 and a new assistant headteacher has been appointed. Two other members of the senior leadership team are currently on maternity leave. In addition, the proportion of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals has risen from around 41% to approximately 55% with some significant variability in each age group.

As a result of the inspection in May 2009, 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 has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Following the May 2009 inspection, standards attained by the then Year 6 pupils rose to be significantly above average after a period of fluctuation between average, below average and low standards. Standards in English in 2009 rose to just above average levels. While this was pleasing, writing standards, and particularly those of boys, were lower. These higher standards were not maintained in 2010 with pupils' writing, again, being low. Nevertheless, there are encouraging signs of improvement. This is because of the strong leadership of the headteacher who is ably supported by her assistant headteacher. On her arrival at the school the headteacher undertook an audit of the school's provision, pulled together work

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already in place to improve standards and set the staff clear expectations for future success including the need to ensure planning and teaching meets the needs of different ability groups. The results have been positive and, while not as yet having an impact on end of key stage standards, there is every indication that they are beginning to do so. These important and correct actions, coupled with good levels of consistency as to how they have been implemented, demonstrate the school's good progress in developing a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Teachers now make clear in their English and mathematics plans what different groups of pupils are to do and learn. The Year 6 teacher, for example, in plans promoting an understanding of good story writing, organised her pupils so that those who needed to acquire some basic skills focused on the use of capital letters and full stops while those who were on target wrote themed paragraphs comparing and contrasting different stories. Importantly, there was challenge for the more-able pupils too, in this case with the pupils writing paragraphs to explore different genres. This clarity in planning, which is a consistent feature across the school, is the result of the strong direction set by the headteacher and her high expectations of what can be achieved. The impact on pupils is seen through their increased enjoyment of writing, the interesting content they produce and their improving standards in punctuation, tenses and style. To enhance these improvements further, leaders – both at senior and subject leader level – appreciate that the next step is to extend this focused planning to the foundation subjects and, within these subjects, more clearly identify opportunities for pupils to write.

In addition to improvements in teachers' planning, there has been a strong focus on identifying underachievement in writing and putting into place interventions to rectify it. These interventions are benefiting pupils well by providing them with opportunities to develop the key literacy skills of speaking and listening, reading and writing which they can develop in other lessons. The interventions include small groups of pupils attending sessions before school to, for example, say, read and write words with different 'ay' sounds. Crucial to the success of these interventions is first, the school's clear view of what it expects pupils to achieve as a result of this work and, second, the implementation of these initiatives early in the school year as opposed to the later start last year. Further work the school has undertaken included a review of reading material. Quite correctly, leaders understand it is the quality and relevance of the materials given to pupils which stimulates their writing. The school has books, displays and artefacts which increasingly interest its pupils. Boys, in particular, spoke of their excitement about, for example, 'The Iron Man' and Egyptian embalmers and enthused about the writing they were to produce. A sure sign of the potential of the school's work was seen in a Year 3 lesson. In it, through the teacher's good questioning and prompting of pupils, the pupils not only offered ideas of content to include in letters to 'The Iron Man', they were also confident in suggesting the need for connectives to join sentences together and the use of a variety of opening sentences to engage the interest of the reader. The good questioning seen in this lesson was a feature of teaching used effectively in all the lessons observed.

Work to develop the skills of teachers who have leadership and management responsibilities is ongoing but has been adversely affected by recent changes in staffing. Nonetheless, discussions with subject leaders confirm their enthusiasm to play a more active role in judging quality in their subject areas and sharing good practice. Improvements have been made to the arrangements for promoting community cohesion. An audit has been undertaken leading to a clear action plan and policy.

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

Mark Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in (insert month and year)

- Improve the achievement of boys in Years 3 to 6, particularly in raising their standards in writing.
- Develop the skills of teachers who have leadership and management responsibilities.
- Ensure that teachers plan more clearly to show what they expect different ability groups in their classes to attain.
- Make better arrangements for promoting community cohesion.