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Mr Robert Lane
Headteacher
Four Acres Primary School
Four Acres
Withywood
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BS13 8RB

Dear Mr Lane

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Four Acres Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 28 September 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. I would be grateful if you could pass on my thanks to the pupils who spoke to me throughout the visit and to the staff who met with me.

There have been no significant changes to the context of the school since the last inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 15–16 July 2008, 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 satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Since the last inspection, national results for 2010 have been published. These show that teachers' assessments point to a clear improvement in attainment in reading and writing and a slight improvement in mathematics. The proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected level has increased by around 20% in English, following a low point in 2009. Very few pupils attained the Level 5 in English or mathematics this year, and attainment overall is still below average.

Pupils' progress has been speeded up and is good in many lessons but not consistently so. An assessment cycle, in its infancy at the time of the last inspection, provides teachers and senior staff with the information they need to track every



pupil's achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. This ensures they put the right things in place to help pupils improve their rate of progress. A review of the school's data shows that progress between Year 1 and Year 2 is good overall with an improving, all be it satisfactory, rate of progress for the majority of pupils between Year 3 and Year 6.

Particular improvements can be seen in pupils' speaking and writing skills and this matches well with changes made to the curriculum and teaching. Pupils respond well to varied opportunities to write extended pieces around themes that interest them. For example, pupils in Year 2 like to write about going on a lion hunt because 'it is fun and they learn new words' to add to their maps. Lesson observations showed how teachers develop pupils' speaking and writing skills effectively. In one lesson, pupils participated in a role play in threes to generate ideas for writing a Greek tragedy. The task to provide both a silent and spoken dialogue resulted in pupils assembling a rich bank of phrasing for dramatic effect. Good use is made of small group discussion to plan for written work in other subjects and topics. In another lesson, pupils had to generate and record their ideas about the functions of the body's organs. The teacher skilfully wove a competitive element into the task for each team which resulted in all pupils getting down to the task immediately and writing their contributions on the annotated human body. The lesson was an excellent example of practical and active learning. The support was low key, with much of the self-learning coming through the complete engagement with the task and pupils questioning each other. Topic books were provided that were perfectly matched to the stage of pupils' reading development, and frequent planned stops ensured all pupils took part in assessing what they had learnt and set clear targets for the next step in their learning.

There is still inconsistency in developing the pupil as an active learner across the school. This is because the teaching does not sufficiently model the thinking and learning process or use a wide enough repertoire of strategies to assess how well pupils build on prior skills and knowledge. While the formative assessment systems across the school are more robust and thorough, the information on preferred learning styles and what engages the young learner, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage, is insufficiently developed as part of the daily provision inside and out.

There is greater consistency, as a result of attention to the whole-school policy, in how teachers mark pupils' work. Pupils are unanimous that this has improved 'really well' and are motivated to set higher expectations of themselves. They are given feedback on their strengths as well prompts for their next steps, although it is not clear from the sample of work seen if pupils have gone back to act on these.

The local authority has supported the school well and now views the school as having sufficient capacity to sustain further improvement. The inspection bears out this view. Pupil performance reviews are regular and evaluation of the impact of support programmes has begun. The school leaders and managers have still to bring

this information into the cycle of school improvement review to assist in strategic planning.

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

Jonathan Palk
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in July 2009

- Improve achievement and raise standards, especially in speaking and writing and for boys, and ensure that pupils speak and write more consistently in meaningful sentences.
- Ensure that teachers give pupils more information about how to improve when they mark their work.
- Throughout the school, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage and into Year 1, provide more opportunities for pupils to learn practically and independently by choosing learning activities for themselves.