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Mrs S Holmes
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Holmes

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of South Parade Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 16 September 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the Chair of the Governing Body, staff, the local authority representative and the group of pupils who gave up some of their time to meet with me.

There have been some changes to the school's context since the previous inspection in October 2008. Six members of the teaching staff have resigned and six new teachers have been recruited; the majority of these are new or recently qualified teachers. There have been changes to leadership roles with some teachers only recently taking on new areas of responsibility.

As a result of the inspection on 13 and 14 October 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 of 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.

Attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, both in 2008 and in 2009, was well below average in almost all subjects. In 2010, provisional results for Year 2 pupils indicate below average attainment overall and well below average attainment for boys in writing. In 2010, the most notable success for the school has been in improving attainment for pupils in Year 6. The school's unvalidated results for 2010 show that the percentage of pupils attaining Level 4 in English and mathematics is

above the Government floor target of 65% for the first time since the school was opened. The proportion of pupils who reached the higher Level 5; in English increased by 18% and in mathematics by 23%. Inspection evidence and the school's own data indicate that attainment across the school is generally rising. For example, the attainment of the current Year 5 and 6 groups is already higher than in 2009 and these pupils are also on track to attain above the government floor target in both English and mathematics. Although there are some pupils who are making expected or better progress, particularly as a result of extra support, there remains a small minority of pupils who are not yet making the progress that they should make. Across the school as a whole, girls tend to make better gains than boys in writing. The school has correctly identified this as an area for further improvement along with improving mental calculation skills.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, systems and practices for assessing what children know and can do have been improved. Almost all staff have received training to improve the quality of their observations of children's learning through play and this is now a common element of the work of teachers, nursery nurses and support staff. The information from assessments and observations is used to plan learning activities and to further develop children's experiences in all areas of learning. Improved leadership has resulted in well resourced and stimulating learning environments, both outdoors and indoors. Children are happy and are clear about daily routines and expectations. However, there is scope to further raise the expectations of the most able and provide even greater opportunity for children to write across a range of activities, particularly the boys.

The teaching observed during the inspection demonstrated that recent developments are improving classroom practice. For example, learning objectives are now shared with pupils along with the success criteria for evaluating how well pupils are learning. Although lesson planning is generally sound the suggested planning format is not used consistently by all teachers. The school's guidance for the planning of literacy and numeracy lessons indicates that it should include clear lesson objectives, success criteria and how tasks are to be modified for at least three ability levels. However, these elements are not present in all lesson plans. Some good support from teaching assistants was observed for pupils with special educational needs and /or disabilities, but sometimes they provide pupils with too much direction and this hinders the development of pupils' independent learning skills. In the best lessons observed, the pace of learning was brisk and teachers modified their questions to engage and challenge individual pupils. However, on some occasions pupils spend too much time listening to their teachers and not enough time discussing their learning or completing tasks. Where this occurs, pupils, particularly boys, lose concentration and their learning slows.

The environment for learning has been improved and all classrooms now have 'working walls' for literacy and numeracy along with whole-class and individual targets to indicate pupils' next steps in their learning. However, the use that is made of these within lessons varies. The school correctly identifies the need for greater consistency in the implementation of its policies for teaching and learning if

strategies are to become embedded and improve pupils' learning and progress further.

There have been improvements to the systems to help pupils to understand the next steps in their learning. A key element of this has been in developing and implementing a new marking policy. As a result, the marking of work has improved and is mostly done regularly. In some of the examples seen it routinely evaluated pupils' success at achieving the desired learning and provided pupils with targets for completing and improving their next piece of work. Pupils stated that they mostly value these and find them helpful. That said, it was a minority of older pupils who were able to talk with any confidence about the levels of their work and the levels that they were aiming to reach by the end of the year.

The work of the school is evaluated soundly and improvements to the quality of teaching demonstrate securely that improvements are being made. Leaders are clear that there is further work to be done if the school is to secure good progress for all pupils. There is evidence that school leaders know the work of the school and they have accurately identified the most important areas for improvement. There are now better systems in place to closely check on the attainment of individual pupils. Regular meetings to discuss pupils' progress contribute to holding teachers to account for the progress of their pupils and to identify where additional support for individuals is needed. This inspection confirms that appropriate actions are being taken.

The governing body knows and values the work of the school and are aware of where most improvement is needed. It is provided with a good level of detail in the information that it receives from the headteacher and the leadership team. While there are some good examples of the governing body effectively challenging the work of the school, there is scope for this to be extended further to the review of attainment and progress of all groups of pupils. The school engages effectively with the local authority, which has provided satisfactory challenge and support to the school.

This monitoring visit included a check on the school's safeguarding procedures by scrutinising the single central record and found that all members of staff had been subjected to the appropriate checks. Some administrative errors were pointed out to the school's leaders.

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

Amraz Ali
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2008;

- Establish robust and accurate assessment in the EYFS that will inform the next steps of learning for each child and help keep track of their progress.
- Ensure that all lessons cater for the full range of abilities including increased levels of challenge for the more able.
- Ensure that pupils know what level they are working at and understand the next steps needed to make progress.