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Mr Patrick Reid
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Reid

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Sedgley Park Community Primary School

Thank you for the help which you, your staff and senior leaders, the pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and the School Improvement Partner gave when I inspected your school on 20 October 2010. I am grateful for the discussions and for the information provided before and during the inspection.

Since the inspection of January 2009 there has been fluctuation in staffing. The headteacher was absent from school for almost all of the 2009/10 academic year; in his place the deputy headteacher became acting headteacher. In addition, a number of staff have been on maternity leave.

As a result of the inspection on 29 and 30 January 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 these improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

There has been a pattern of general improvement in pupils' progress. In July 2010, just over two-thirds of Year 6 pupils gained the nationally expected Level 4 in both English and mathematics; furthermore approximately one half gained the higher Level 5. These results represent a significant and welcome rise on the previous year when the minimum floor targets were not met. Particularly pleasing was the progress pupils made in mathematics following a concerted effort to improve achievement in this subject. The standards attained by pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2010, however, dipped to low levels following their rise in the previous year. No boys attained the higher Level 3 in reading; no pupils at all attained this higher level in writing and no girls reaching this level in mathematics. Leaders have begun to explore the reasons for this dip and the emerging trend in Key Stage 1

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since 2006 of standards alternating between broadly average and low. However, this analysis, as is the case at Key Stage 2, is not incisive enough and is limited to reporting, for example, that girls did less well than boys or that there has been a rise in the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Nevertheless, these same leaders are progressively improving their skills in evaluation and, for example, in their observations of teaching they are focusing on pupils' learning increasingly well. The result is that their assessment that teaching is improving is accurate. Also accurate is leaders' evaluation that the quality of teaching across the school remains inconsistent and this continues to lead to unevenness in the progress pupils make, particularly in lower Key Stage 2. The steps they have taken to counter this are appropriate. For example, they have ensured that teachers have a more accurate understanding of what national curriculum levels look like. Leaders are aware, though, that their understanding of whole-school developments and progress would be enhanced by checking one another's evaluations. For example, while the quality of teachers' planning has improved, leaders had not picked up that it was focused more on what pupils produced themselves or on activities for them to do, rather than what teachers expected pupils to learn. In addition, leaders' checking of the single central record had lacked rigour, although it does now meet requirements. There is, nonetheless, within the leadership team a clear sense of direction, a drive for improvement and hence a better capacity to sustain improvement. They are supported well in this by the clear reports, challenge and support received from the School Improvement Partner.

Where teaching is good pupils make good progress in their learning. In a mathematics lesson in Year 6, for example, the teacher made clear to the pupils in their multiplication of integers and decimals what was expected of them and provided them with good levels of challenge. As a result, pupils could apply their skills in a real life situation of costing out food and provisions for the school's Hallowe'en party. The pupils' previous learning was built on well, as it was in another good mathematics lesson in Year 2, in which pupils used arrays to support their understanding of multiplication. However, there are, as leaders are aware, missed opportunities across the school to develop skills gained in one area of the curriculum and to apply them elsewhere, for example, in using writing in pupils' topic and science work.

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 January 2009

- In order to raise achievement and standards, ensure that all pupils, particularly the most able, are given work that closely matches their needs and provides an appropriate level of challenge.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning and ensure that pupils make evenly good progress as they move through the school.
- Ensure that self-evaluation and planning for development are cohesively linked and always focus sharply on the raising of standards.

