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Ms M Buckland
Headteacher
Sutton Park Community Primary School
Greatfield Road
Kidderminster
DY11 6PH

Dear Ms Buckland

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 24 November 2010, for the time you gave to our discussions before the visit and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to your school improvement partner and your outgoing chair of governors for coming in to talk to me at such short notice.

Since the last inspection, the new school building has been completed and opened in January 2010. The previous headteacher retired in July 2010 and a new headteacher started in September 2010. Two teachers are currently absent. On the day of the inspection, two classes were covered by supply teachers and not observed. As part of the visit, the procedures for safeguarding children were checked and found to meet requirements.

As a result of the inspection on 27-28 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 inadequate progress in making improvements and inadequate progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement. The inspection has raised very serious concerns. These will be considered by the appropriate Regional Director, Inspection Delivery, who will decide when the school will next be inspected.

Attainment across the school is still well below the national average at both key stages and has not improved enough since the last inspection. Pupils' progress overall is inadequate. Progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those in the Communication Centre with autism and speech and learning difficulties is also too slow. Children in the early years start school working



below the expected levels for their age. They make a sound start, but they lack the expected personal, social and emotional skills by the time they enter Year 1. Attainment on entry to Year 1 is therefore below the national average and remains below average throughout the school. By the end of Year 6, pupils leave the school with attainment which is well below the national average, especially in English and mathematics.

At the last inspection, the school was asked to raise standards in mathematics by improving pupils' ability to tackle problem solving and to provide more opportunities for them to apply their skills in new situations. Since the last visit, attainment in mathematics has not improved and remains well below the national average at both key stages. Inadequate leadership in mathematics has not driven subject improvement with sufficient clarity or rigour and as a result, there remains a lack of consistency, subject knowledge and staff confidence in the teaching of mathematics across the school. Lesson observations on this monitoring visit demonstrated that there are still too few opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills to new situations. This is because the teaching of mathematics is still too teacher directed and is activity led rather than being focused on learning opportunities for pupils. As a result they make slower than expected progress.

The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is generally good. Some pupils move off task when lessons are not interesting enough or they are not sufficiently challenged or motivated by the activity. Attendance for the last school year was 94.2%, in line with the national average and an improvement on the previous year. Too many parents still keep their children away from school unnecessarily, for example, when it is their birthday, and this slows down the progress individual pupils make. Those pupils with regular attendance make better progress.

The quality of teaching and learning across all subjects remains too variable, as at the last inspection. There is too much inconsistency between classes. When better progress is made in one year, it is cancelled out by weaker teaching and learning in the subsequent year. A large number of paired observations were carried out on this visit with the headteacher. No good or outstanding teaching was observed. There remain far too many inadequate or barely satisfactory lessons. Learning objectives and success criteria are not clear in teachers' plans. Teachers talk too much in many lessons and as a consequence, pupils sit for too long listening to the teacher. While they are provided with opportunities to talk to each other and share their ideas, these 'learning partner' activities do not sufficiently improve pupils' learning and thinking. Pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to become practically involved in tasks or find out things for themselves and occasionally low level disruption in the form of chatting and boredom ensues. Teachers' planned activities are too often dull and lack real excitement or challenge. Teachers do not check that pupils understand the learning intentions or review the lesson regularly enough to check how much pupils have learned and whether they need more support or challenge. In these lessons, pupils make slow gains with their learning and do not

make the progress expected for their age group. In the better lessons, teachers' questioning is more focused so that pupils are more engaged and the teacher is responsive to pupils' comments and ideas. Since the last inspection, the senior staff and phase leaders have been unable to provide sufficient support or training to other colleagues to improve the quality of teaching and have failed to increase the proportion that is good or outstanding.

Discussion with Year 6 pupils demonstrated that they were broadly aware of the National Curriculum level they are currently working at but did not know what they needed to do to improve their work or move to the next level. The marking of work in books by teachers is inconsistent across the school. Some work is not marked at all, including homework. Many teachers mark to praise effort, but few mark in a way that helps pupils understand where they went wrong or what they need to do to improve in subsequent pieces of work. Pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunities to follow up any useful comments written by the teachers in their books.

The new headteacher has an accurate view of the school's overall provision and has produced a useful raising attainment plan. There is now a much stronger focus on improving learning. However, as at the last inspection, leadership and management at all levels remains inconsistent and is not well placed to make the rapid improvements required to raise pupil outcomes. Since the last inspection, the track record and impact of past actions to improve key areas, for example, improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising attainment in core subjects, especially mathematics, have been too slow.

The local authority has supported the school well since the appointment of the new headteacher and is providing good practical support to improve key areas. It is still too early to judge the full impact of these actions on improving attainment and accelerating pupils' progress.

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

Clive Kempton HMI
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise standards in mathematics by improving pupils' ability to tackle problem solving and providing more opportunities for them to apply their skills to new situations.
- Improve pupils' progress by consistently giving them precise and measurable targets for improvement and by ensuring that teachers' marking refers to these targets and shows pupils their next steps in learning.
- Raise the quality of teaching so that a greater proportion is good or outstanding, by ensuring that lessons are more involving and engaging for pupils and that they have more opportunities for independent learning.