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27 January 2011

Mr K Armitage
Headteacher
Joseph Locke Primary School
Shaw Street
Barnsley
South Yorkshire
S70 6JL

Dear Mr Armitage,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Joseph Locke Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 26 January 2011, for the time your deputy gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please give my thanks also to the pupils who met with me and to the School Improvement Partner for finding the time to meet with me.

As a result of the inspection on 1 December 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 of 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.

Pupils' attainment improved in the year after the last inspection. The school's data for Key Stage 2 show that pupils' attainment in 2010 was notably higher than in 2009 and broadly average. There is now a clear upward trend in attainment in mathematics. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was similar to that in 2009 and broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school has made secure and consistent improvements to the quality of teaching and learning. Inadequate teaching has been tackled determinedly and the school is now focussed on developing more effective approaches to teaching, particularly in literacy and numeracy. As a result the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Assessment information is used carefully to check the effectiveness of teaching. The teachers plan lessons thoughtfully and they have increased the level of challenge for the pupils, although sometimes the work they set is still too easy. The pupils told the inspector that lessons are good and generally the work set is getting harder. They are clear about what they have to do, are now expected to work more quickly and are rarely sitting around unproductively. These features were evident in the lessons seen during the inspection, which were busy, orderly and focussed, although occasionally, the teachers did not spot

January 2011



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

individuals whose concentration was beginning to wane, or who had not provided answers to questions during whole-class sessions. The pupils' work is marked frequently and consistently in accordance with the school's policies. The pupils understand the marking and find it helpful, although the comments made by the teachers are generally more precise in the marking of literacy than other subjects. Interesting topics have been used well to extend the opportunities for the pupils to practise their skills in different subjects.

The senior leaders and other managers have focussed unequivocally on tackling the areas for improvement at the last inspection and taken a sensibly incremental approach. They have removed the wide variations in the quality of teaching and learning and are now concentrating on developing better practice, based on consistent and effective use of information about the pupils' progress from regular and frequent monitoring of the teachers' planning, lessons and marking. They identify less effective practice astutely and provide good support that enables the teachers to improve. The staff are responding well to the leadership provided and are working conscientiously to improve lessons. Thoughtful use of external support, including from the local authority, has provided effective professional development for individual members of staff with responsibilities, so that they have developed a secure command of their roles and are increasingly successful in bringing improvements in teaching and learning, and for the whole staff. The senior leaders and the governing body have ensured that there is clear and well-managed accountability throughout the school. The processes for managing improvement at the school have been secured and the senior leaders have an accurate knowledge of what still needs to improve. As a result of these factors, the quality of teaching and learning has improved and pupils' attainment has increased.

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

Mr Clive Moss
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 1 December 2009

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in order to increase pupils' progress, especially in mathematics, by:
 - the effective use of assessment to ensure that work closely matches pupils' needs
 - using teachers' marking to help pupils quickly improve their work.
- Enrich the curriculum to make the learning and application of basic skills relevant and interesting by:
 - closely matching work in literacy and numeracy lessons to the pupils' studies in other subjects
 - ensuring pupils apply their reading, writing and mathematical skills throughout all subjects at a level appropriate to their age and ability.
- Ensure that the monitoring of provision by senior leaders and other staff takes account of all aspects of teaching and learning, as well as those under closer scrutiny.