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Mr M Boxall
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Boxall

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Montgomery Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 1 December 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the Chair of the Governing Body, teachers and pupils who spent time talking to me.

Since the last inspection, the number of pupils on roll has fallen from 390 to 338. The headteacher retired in April 2010 and the school's deputy headteacher became acting headteacher for one term before also retiring. One long-serving teacher has retired and three newly qualified teachers have been appointed. A new headteacher took charge in September 2010, working alongside a new deputy headteacher who was promoted from within the school. The new senior leadership team has worked extremely well to support staff and there is a renewed feeling of optimism with staff looking forward to the future with increased confidence.

As a result of the inspection on 9 December 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.

Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 has fluctuated over the past three years, but in 2010 was broadly similar to the national average and similar to that seen at the last inspection. Attainment was higher in mathematics than in English because pupils



made good rather than satisfactory progress resulting in a greater proportion gaining Level 4 and Level 5 than in previous years. Improved attainment on all measures at the end of Year 2 in 2009 has been consolidated in 2010. The attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has remained above that made by similar pupils nationally because of the good support provided by the school.

The headteacher has made good progress in ensuring the development of a robust system of target setting and tracking. As a result, the school has a much more accurate view of pupils' starting points and the progress that each one is making towards challenging termly, yearly and end of key stage targets. Consequently, teachers are better able to tailor learning activities to fully meet the needs of all pupils and the school is able to target interventions more effectively in those areas where there is underachievement. For example, data analysis identified an issue with progress in reading at Year 2 and Year 4, and writing also emerged as an area of relative weakness across the school. Senior leaders have acted swiftly and pupils are benefiting from the introduction of weekly 'Big Writing' lessons and a clear framework for the teaching of reading alongside a 'Reading around the UK' book tracking competition. Pupils are motivated by these new aspects to their curriculum and say how much more they enjoy their learning in these areas. Early indications are that progress in writing and reading are accelerating but the school acknowledges that this continues to be a key focus of improvement work.

Under the clear direction of the new headteacher, the school has worked hard to eradicate inadequate teaching and improve satisfactory teaching. Since September 2010, all school staff have been fully engaged in a robust professional dialogue to develop a common set of principles for promoting effective learning. A good benchmark has thus been established. Training, coaching and regular lesson observations are being used well by senior leaders to accurately identify strengths, weaknesses and points for improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and the use of assessment. The school has been given good support by the local authority to develop this aspect of its work. The school recognises that changes to practice are not fully embedded across the school and the senior leaders need to assure themselves that they have evidence of teachers consistently performing at a higher level. However, a good whole-school plan has been developed to drive further improvements.

While inspectors saw mostly satisfactory lessons and some good teaching, a small percentage of inadequate teaching was also seen. Where teaching is active and stimulating, pupils enjoy their lessons and join in enthusiastically. For example, after a focused introduction from the teacher, pupils in one class were eager to share their ideas and demonstrate their understanding through designing and making reflective safety tabards. In another class, teacher and pupils worked well together to use collaborative simile work to develop and refine extended sentences that created powerful imagery. Where teaching is not as effective, learning activities are



not sufficiently focused to support pupils' progress and too much teacher-talk limits opportunities for pupils to develop their ideas fully.

More accurate and frequent assessment throughout the school is helping pupils to understand what they have achieved and how to improve their work. Inspectors saw particularly good examples in the 'Big Write' journals where teachers provide precise subject-specific guidance which clearly identifies the next steps. However, variability still exists across the school. Pupils are able to discuss their targets clearly and are developing an understanding of how the comments made on their work are helping them improve and aim for higher standards.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, inspectors observed good activities that children were able to initiate for themselves. Children demonstrated good behaviour, independence, confidence, and ability to share and communicate with their peers and adults. Effective questioning, good teaching and well-matched activities enable the children to make good progress from below expected starting points. Consequently, by the time they enter Year 1, most are working securely within the expectations for their age in all the areas of learning.

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

Karl Sampson
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring activities in lessons match the learning needs of all pupils.
- Ensure senior leaders make more rigorous use of monitoring systems in order to provide teachers with guidance on how to improve and to sustain the recent improvement in standards.
- Ensure that information about their progress is shared with pupils and that they are given guidance on how to improve their work.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, provide increased opportunities for children to develop their language and social skills.