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Mrs Walker
Belmont Primary School
Belmont Street
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Dear Mrs Walker

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave me when I inspected your school on 5 May 2011, 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 Governors, members of staff and the pupils who spoke with me.

Since the last inspection, there have been significant staffing changes. One of the two deputy headteachers, who is also the special educational needs coordinator, returned on the day of the monitoring visit after a year on maternity leave and now works on a part-time basis. The established numeracy leader left the school and a replacement was appointed in November 2010. The literacy leader returned on a part-time basis after a year on maternity leave in November 2010. The headteacher covered this role in her absence and a new literacy leader has been appointed from September 2011. Two long-serving teachers left the school and three newly qualified teachers achieved qualified teacher status. The second deputy headteacher has taken on the role of assessment coordinator, and a new special educational needs coordinator is now sharing responsibility for this role.

As a result of the inspection on 16 September 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 improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Since the last inspection, there are signs of improvement in pupils' achievement. A rising trend in attainment at the end of Year 6 in mathematics has been sustained. Evidence confirms that pupils in Year 6 are currently on track to attain above

September 2010



average standards in mathematics. Results in the national tests in English at the end of Year 6 declined from above to just below average over recent years. However, evidence from teacher assessments, pupils' work and during lesson observations confirms that this decline has been halted and Year 6 pupils are once again on track to attain average levels of attainment in English.

The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 from 2008 to 2010 indicated a trend of decline in attainment in reading, writing and mathematics from above to below average. Evidence confirms that this decline has been halted and is being reversed. Pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 are currently on track to attain at least average standards. Standards are above average in Year 3. More pupils are on track across the school, to attain the higher grade of which they are capable.

Pupils get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The majority enter Year 1 with the levels of knowledge and skills expected for their age. The progress pupils make is mostly satisfactory and, more recently, for an increasing number it is good. Evidence confirms that, in most classes, progress has been quickening term-on-term this year. However, this hides a more complex picture of variation between classes, year groups and subjects in the rate at which pupils make progress. The school's own data analysis and other monitoring activities clearly identifies times when pupils' progress slows too much, leading to a reliance on them having to receive additional interventions or make accelerated progress later to catch up.

Following a dip, attendance is now average, although there are too many occasions when pupils are taken out of school in term time for family holidays. A new behaviour policy is being applied diligently and pupils are responding well, which is improving learning behaviour.

A key to the school's developing success has been improvements to leadership's capacity to drive and embed school improvement. The management structure has been reorganised and accountability and communication have improved. Staff and governors are united behind the drive for improvement and morale is high. There are more systematic and rigorous strategies to improve the quality of teaching and the headteacher holds staff to account for their performance. As a result, the proportion of good and better teaching is improving. There is still not enough of this good practice to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress. This is because some teachers are not focusing well enough on the learning taking place for all pupils in their classes.

Senior leaders and core subject leaders are playing their part in a range of monitoring and evaluation activities and helping to set the strategic direction of the school. Plans for improvement and evaluations of success are very detailed. Even so, they do not include enough clear timelines, measurable criteria and interim benchmarks based on outcomes for pupils. Leaders are providing valuable support to colleagues to help them improve the quality of learning in classrooms. Some of this work is in its early stages and its impact has yet to be measured. The key to recent

improvements has been the overhaul of assessment and data-tracking procedures. Class teachers take responsibility for collating and analysing assessment information and are more secure in their understanding and ability to assess pupils' work accurately. This is resulting in a range of reliable data which is being used appropriately to inform improvement planning and to target additional resources and classroom support. It has also resulted in a more consistent approach to lesson planning with more teachers planning to meet the needs of different individuals and groups effectively. The best teachers modify their plans during lessons as they check and respond to pupils' understanding. This is not the case in all lessons.

Learning objectives and 'steps to success' are widely used and pupils say they help them to improve. Marking is more effective, particularly in writing, and pupils welcome the 'next steps' they are given, although some say they are not always given time to carry them out. Many pupils receive individualised targets but a whole-school approach to target setting is still developing. The focus on developing basic writing skills is paying dividends. Presentation is improving but spelling is often poor and there are not enough examples of high-quality writing on display to which pupils can aspire. Targeted additional interventions, for example to support reading, have ensured good progress for pupils.

School leaders value the support they have received from the local authority, particularly in literacy and in improving the quality of teaching and 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

Joanne Harvey
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

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

- Increase the proportion of good teaching across the school, by ensuring that teachers:
 - make very clear to pupils what they are going to learn and explain to them how their success will be measured
 - ensure that teachers make best possible use of all available assessment information to enable them to plan lessons that provide work at the right level for children of all abilities
 - explain what pupils must improve in order to move to the next level.

- Increase pupils' achievement by improving:
 - the accuracy of assessment of pupils' progress within lessons and through the National Curriculum levels
 - the analysis of the outcomes of assessment to accurately inform plans for learning.

- Sharpen the school's systems for embedding ambition and driving improvement by:
 - being more systematic in following up weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment within challenging timescales
 - further refining the tracking of pupils to determine the progress made by different groups to inform intervention
 - involving more subject and middle leaders in evaluating provision
 - adding specific, measurable and timed targets in all planning, and reporting quantifiable outcomes against each target.