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10 June 2011

Mrs M Burkett
Headteacher
West Melton Primary School
Stokewell Road
Wath-upon-Dearne
Rotherham
South Yorkshire
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Dear Mrs Burkett,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of West Melton Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 9 June 2011, 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 members of staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and in particular, the pupils who spent time talking to me and showing me their work.

Since the last inspection, the school has experienced some instability in staffing. The deputy headteacher, who is also the substantive numeracy coordinator, and the Early Years Foundation Stage leader both returned to work during the spring term of 2011, following a period of maternity leave. In the interim period, the literacy coordinator acted as deputy headteacher. There have been changes to staffing in the Key Stage 1 class which is taught by two teachers on a job-share basis.

As a result of the inspection in March 2010, 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 in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2010 was low, matching the school's predictions reported at the last inspection. However, while pupils' achievement remained satisfactory overall, their rate of progress was more rapid relative to their starting points than in previous years. For example, low-ability pupils made good progress in English as a result of tailored support. The most recent assessment information indicates that pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to meet targets in English and mathematics which will reflect a rise in attainment. However, progress across the three mixed-age classes in Key Stages 1 and 2 remains uneven. Evidence from pupils' workbooks and the school's assessment information indicate that Key Stage 2 pupils are making more rapid progress in developing

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their writing skills and the rate of their progress in mathematics is also beginning to improve. However, at Key Stage 1, the pace of learning is slower and attainment by the end of Year 2 remains low. This is limiting the impact of more rapid progress made during Key Stage 2 on raising pupils' attainment over time.

A well-focused improvement plan has enabled staff to work together to implement a good range of strategies to improve the quality of writing, particularly at Key Stage 2. During lesson observations, Year 3 and 4 pupils explained confidently, their plans for an extended piece of writing recounting a recent visit to the National Media Museum. This is as a result of a whole-school focus on developing pupils' skills in text organisation to improve the fluency and quality of writing. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 extended their vocabulary and use of language through role play to inform their writing about the first moon landing. In these lessons, pupils had a good understanding of what was expected of them and worked well both independently and cooperatively in groups. During discussions, pupils were keen to show how their writing has improved during the year. Their commonly shared views were that these improvements are due to: the interesting topics they have studied; the opportunities to talk about ideas first through discussion, role play or drama; and the new marking policy which gives them clear guidance about how to improve their work.

Additional adults work effectively across the school to support the learning needs of different groups of pupils. Planning is tailored well in the Key Stage 2 classes to meet the broad range of abilities in both mathematics and literacy. The coordinators for numeracy and literacy have provided strong support for Key Stage 1 teachers to improve the quality of their planning. However, while pupils in Year 2 speak positively about their experiences, the impact of teaching on their learning and progress is less evident.

The introduction of 'Big Maths' lessons has proved very popular with pupils, who enjoy the challenge of working alongside those of similar ability to tackle areas of common weakness in their mathematical skills and knowledge. Pupils are becoming more proficient and confident in applying basic skills, including mental calculations, to solve mathematical problems. Time is also allocated to ensure that all pupils use computers regularly to support their learning in mathematics.

Leaders have ensured that the strengths identified at the last inspection have been sustained and have strengthened the focus on improving the overall quality of pupils' learning in order to raise attainment. Pupils' personal 'learning logs' have raised the profile of regular reading at home and improved links with families. A new programme of 'assertive mentoring' is also beginning to increase pupils' ability to reflect on how well they are progressing towards individual learning targets. The headteacher has managed a period of staffing instability effectively and maintained a strong focus on key priorities, informed by a systematic process of self-review. Senior leaders have acted rigorously to address concerns about pupils' performance at Key Stage 1. However, inconsistencies remain in the quality of provision and its impact on learning between Key Stage 1 and 2.

The Chair of the Governing Body has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Members of the governing body are regular visitors to the school and, as a result, are more able to hold leaders to account for pupils' performance. Good support provided by the local authority has promoted the development of teachers' subject expertise and teaching in mathematics. A recent review by the local authority, at the headteacher's request, has provided a helpful steer for planning to secure further improvement to provision in mathematics. Staff also speak highly about additional professional development opportunities made available by the school, that have equipped them with the skills to fulfil their specific roles more effectively.

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

Sara Morrissey
Her Majesty's Inspector

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2010

- Raise attainment in mathematics throughout the school by:
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment information more effectively to plan appropriate work for pupils of different abilities
 - improving teachers' knowledge and their expectations of what pupils should be able to achieve in all areas of mathematics, such as problem solving
 - making better use of computers to support and enhance pupils' learning in mathematics.

- Raise attainment in writing for all pupils by:
 - improving the quality of teachers' marking and ensuring that pupils are given the opportunity to respond to comments and correct their work
 - planning more opportunities for pupils to use and develop their writing skills in all subjects.