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14 December 2011

Mrs James
Headteacher
Ellistown Community Primary School
Whitehill Road
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Dear Mrs James

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Ellistown Community Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 December 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 members of staff and the pupils who spoke with me.

Since the last inspection there have been significant staffing changes. Five permanent teachers have left and three others are currently on maternity leave. Three permanent and two temporary members of staff have been appointed. Of these new staff, three were newly qualified teachers. The special educational needs coordinator left and a replacement has been appointed.

As a result of the inspection on 1 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 good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Since the last inspection, there are signs of significant improvement in pupils' achievement. For example, standards have been steadily rising in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that children are now attaining above-average levels of knowledge and skills when they enter Year 1. They continue to build on these skills in Years 1 and 2 where for the first time in several years, pupils' attainment was above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics in the teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2011. Though the Key Stage 2 national tests results in 2011 showed attainment to have been maintained at broadly average in English and mathematics, the proportions of pupils achieving the expected grade for

September 2010



their age improved to be slightly better than in most schools. The number of pupils who attained the highest grade also increased, but there are still not enough pupils attaining the highest grade of which they are capable.

Encouragingly, though there is some variation in other year groups and between subjects, an increasing number of groups are attaining above the levels expected for their age. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment which are generally below those expected. Because of changes to personnel and an increasing number of embedded improvements in teaching, not only has underachievement been eradicated but the balance is beginning to shift from the majority of pupils making satisfactory progress to an increasing proportion making good progress. Progress particularly accelerates in Years 5 and 6, where pupils catch up fully from a previous period of underachievement. Pupils' progress is tracked extremely carefully and where there is potential for progress to slow, successful interventions swiftly ensure that this can be addressed. A recent change of leadership for special educational needs and an overhaul for provision has resulted in much more rigorous systems for tracking the performance of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Much more sharply focused support is ensuring they make at least as much progress as their peers. For pupils who may face challenging circumstances, barriers to learning are minimised and these pupils are helped to progress well.

Pupils demonstrate their increasing enjoyment of school through their average but improving attendance. Because of consistently effective behaviour management and very positive relationships, pupils' behaviour is mostly good and often exemplary in lessons, where it makes a strong contribution to good learning. Pupils were seen to collaborate and cooperate enthusiastically to discuss and solve mathematical and other problems. All were keen to be involved and to do well.

A key to success has been the significant strengthening of leaders' capacity to drive forward school improvement. The headteacher and her able senior leadership team have worked together highly successfully, despite ongoing staffing uncertainty, to bring more consistency to systems for monitoring and evaluation and consequently to the quality of teaching and learning, and the use of assessment. They hold teachers to account for pupils' performance but also offer ongoing and effective bespoke support to enable teachers to improve their performance and impact on outcomes for pupils. There is a rigorous cycle of monitoring and evaluation activities, the findings of which are swiftly acted upon. Lesson observations and work scrutiny, for example, are routinely conducted by all members of the senior leadership team, who make accurate judgements about their quality and focus resources and training astutely to facilitate further improvements where necessary. Consequently, in lessons observed where teachers consistently applied the principles of effective teaching agreed with the senior management team, pupils were seen to make good progress.

Systems for assessing and tracking individual pupils' performance are thorough and continue to be refined. Targets have become increasingly ambitious. Importantly,

teachers themselves have been empowered to analyse assessment data and use this information increasingly effectively to inform their planning for future learning. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have risen. Planning is detailed and conscientiously done. Pupils themselves say that their work has become more challenging and that most teachers are making them work harder. They know their targets now and say they help them to improve. In the best lessons seen, learning proceeded at a good pace, driven by teachers' good subject knowledge and careful planning to meet the needs and interests of all abilities, supplemented by challenging and open questioning to check individual pupils' understanding, address misconceptions and really make them think and work hard. In these lessons, pupils have developed the necessary skills to work independently to solve problems and to challenge themselves to improve and to do as well as they can. Pupils themselves say that teachers 'don't just tell you what to do but help you find out different ways of doing things and praise you when you succeed'.

Leaders are aware that some inconsistencies still remain. For example, pupils' progress sometimes slows in lessons where teachers are not clear enough about what they want pupils to learn, or they have planned tasks which are too easy for some and too hard for others. Occasionally, they do not check pupils' understanding often enough to be able to swiftly modify their plans. Additional adults often make a strong contribution to good learning in lessons, and through additional interventions. Very occasionally opportunities are missed to use them to their full potential. The work done to improve the teaching of the sounds that letters make and other early reading and writing skills is paying off. Teachers' subject knowledge is particularly secure in these subject areas, though in mathematics it continues to be a focus for development. Some excellent examples of developmental marking were seen which provided pupils with an assessment of their success and the all-important next steps for further learning. This approach is more consistently applied in writing, for example, than in mathematics.

School leaders say they have valued the recent support they have received from the local authority to help facilitate the sharing of best practice within the school.

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 March 2010

- Ensure the consistency of good teaching and learning by all teachers following the example of the best ones and:
 - providing work that meets the needs of the different abilities in the class
 - using effective and consistent methods to manage pupils' behaviour.