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Mr Jon Hopkins
The Headteacher
Fallings Park Primary School
Old Fallings Lane
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Dear Mr Hopkins

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Friday 5 June, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please will you pass my thanks to the staff, governors and pupils of the school for their participation during my visit?

Since the school was inspected in October 2008, there have been changes to teaching staff in Year 4, and the Early Years Foundation Stage classes have been housed together in refurbished accommodation.

As a result of the inspection on 7 and 8 October 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress across the curriculum but particularly in mathematics
- ensure teachers provide challenging work in mathematics and use assessments to match work accurately to individual pupils' needs
- improve overall attendance by reducing the level of persistent absence
- improve the outdoor environment so that it promotes high quality learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Standards in the 2008 RaiseOnline report, which was published after the October inspection, were well below average at the end of Year 6, which was similar to the previous year. Standards in mathematics rose marginally.



During the current year, a firm focus on improving provision in order to raise standards and achievement has ensured that the decline in mathematics has been arrested. Evidence from lessons, examples of pupils' work, and school progress data shows that standards in mathematics are now a little higher than last year and that pupils' progress is accelerating. Whilst pupils' overall progress in mathematics is satisfactory, achievement is not yet consistent across all year groups and ability sets. Achievement in English continues to be satisfactory.

There has been satisfactory improvement of the key components of mathematics achievement that were identified as weaknesses in October last year. The revised planning systems have brought improved accuracy in the match of work to pupils' abilities. This has much reduced the unnecessary skills practice and focus on obtaining correct answers identified in the inspection report. Pupils' mental arithmetic, knowledge of multiplication tables and problem solving work are all better than they were, and many pupils work more quickly. This was particularly evident in the Year 6 ability sets visited during my time in school. Pupils' greater mathematics knowledge and skills and their satisfactory achievement are contributing to their improved economic well-being. This complements the work undertaken to broaden pupils' enterprise skills, initiative and independence.

The satisfactory improvement of standards and achievement, especially in mathematics, is the result of successful work to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Differentiation in lessons is now more reliable, although some planning for the different groups focuses on activities rather than the expected outcomes. As we saw during the shared learning walk, there are times in lessons, especially at the start, when teaching assistants do not have a clearly defined role. At such times, their contribution depends on their spontaneous response to pupils' needs rather than on a planned programme of observation and intervention. Nonetheless, the overall quality of teaching has improved and the proportion of good teaching now exceeds the current target set by the school and the local authority. It is still not as high as might be expected, although the school is ready to set a revised target to maintain the improvement. The inadequate teaching of the past has been eliminated, particularly now there is improved teaching quality in Year 4.

The other key reason for the improvement in pupils' achievement is the much more rigorous tracking of pupils' progress and greater consistency in setting and sharing targets for pupils. This last is particularly marked in mathematics and, as the leaders of numeracy and literacy agree, there is scope to extend the positive developments in mathematics to English. In doing this, there is room for improvement in the provision of opportunities for pupils to talk together about their targets, for teachers to give more oral prompts in lessons about the level of work achieved, and for the creation of a written dialogue in books based on teachers' marking of work.

Greater and firmer direction and higher expectations by the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and subject leader of mathematics, have led to the satisfactory progress made in improving the quality of provision. The more effective leadership has also brought good improvement to attendance rates, with a

steady fall in the amount of persistent absence. The current attendance figure is not far short of the national average, and comfortably exceeds the local authority target. However, there are still variations week by week, sometimes due to the number of holidays taken in term time. There is good evidence of the school's strong stand on such matters and the celebration of increased attendance is clearly influencing the pupils, most of whom visibly enjoy being in school.

The refurbishment of the Early Years Foundation Stage classrooms has been a success and the potential for a vibrant, exciting education for the children has improved because of this. The development of the outside accommodation has included the provision of some high quality large play apparatus and more thoughtful use of the different zones. Satisfactory progress with improvement of the outside area and quality of experiences for children is evident. Children have improved opportunities to work and play outside, although much of this is still at times directed too strongly by the adults. The forthcoming demolition of obsolete buildings gives the school the opportunity to further develop the outdoor provision to enable greater free flow for children between inside and out, greater integration of provision between Nursery and Reception classes, and even better provision of experiences across all areas of learning.

Since the notice to improve, the local authority has provided effective support to enable the school to move forward with confidence and the right agenda. The reservations about the local authority statement of action, contained in the letter from Ofsted in December 2008, have been answered fully. Whilst local authority personnel still provide support and guidance for the school's improvement, senior leaders and governors are increasingly developing effective links with other schools and using the emerging strengths of the school itself to model good practice. This is proving beneficial for pupils' achievement. The local authority rightly recognises the need for less intensive support for the school as its improvement consolidates.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Carrington
Additional Inspector