

09 June 2009

Mr Paul Bryant, Headteacher  
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Mill Lane  
Whittlesford  
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Dear Mr Bryant

### Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave me when I inspected your school on 19 May 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please thank your vice-chair of governors for taking the time to meet me and also thank staff and pupils for their help with the inspection.

Since the last inspection, a new senior leadership team has been established, with a deputy headteacher taking up her appointment in September 2008. Although there was an interruption caused by her maternity leave between December 2008 and April 2009 the team continued to drive improvement. In addition a new teacher joined the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage in September 2008 and a new Year 2 teacher in January 2009.

As a result of the inspection on 8-9 May 2008, the school was asked to

- Ensure that the Foundation Stage gives children a good start in their learning.
- Build a management team to strengthen consistency and continuity in teaching, learning and progress through the school.
- Further develop the use of assessment to raise expectations of the progress pupils are capable of making.

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

Children's attainment when they enter school is slightly above national expectations. On leaving the school in 2008, the attainment of Year 6 pupils was also slightly above expectations demonstrating satisfactory progress overall. However the school knows that at this time pupils' progress throughout the school was too variable,

particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage where it was inadequate. As a result of action taken, children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage is now very good and the rate of progress is increasing in all year groups. Overall progress is now good, but remains variable due to historic gaps in pupils learning. The school is identifying these gaps through ongoing assessment and addressing them effectively through lesson planning and through the use of interventions.

The school can now rightly claim that the Early Years Foundation Stage gives children a very good start in their learning. The learning environment is rich and vibrant, with challenging experiences provided for children both indoors and outside. Children move between the areas engaging in the various activities which include making playdough in the cooking area, and making sure that (toy) animals are not killed when blue water is added to the yellow water in which they live. The children were sure that their animals could not live in this green water. Planning is very detailed with clear guidance for each area of learning. Record keeping is rigorous and parents appreciate their child's record of 'My time in Year R'. An exemplary feature of this stimulating provision is fruit time, when the children enjoy the challenge of working out number problems and buying fruit using the correct coins.

Assessment is now used effectively. Errors in assessing the level of pupils' attainment, including at the point of joining school, have been ironed out. The school rightly re-assessed all pupils at the beginning of this school year, and re-established the baseline for each pupil. Regular moderation meetings ensure all staff accurately assess levels and have a shared expectation regarding rates of progress. Progress is now tracked effectively in all year groups, and action is taken to make sure that pupils who are in danger of falling behind their expected levels catch up. By using both assessment data and day-to-day assessments of pupils' learning, most teachers ensure that activities meet pupils' learning needs, although at times learning is pitched at slightly the wrong level. This has been recognised and is being addressed by the senior leadership team, who are committed to ensuring that pupils make the best possible progress.

Leadership responsibilities are distributed between subject and key stage leaders and the senior team work closely together to drive improvement. They have embraced the support of the local authority and worked closely with all staff to improve provision. The quality of teaching is now good with teaching assistants also making a significant contribution to pupils' learning. However, staff are not complacent and are keen to further improve their work. Senior leaders, through their own monitoring and with the support of the local authority have a good understanding of what needs to be done to further improve progress and the quality of delivery. They are increasingly identifying ways to improve practice. They recognise the need for greater rigour in timetabling their monitoring activities and in the frequency of monitoring, and to check the implementation of agreed procedures.

The support given by the local authority since the last inspection has been highly effective and instrumental to the changes made in the quality of provision. The value

of this input is endorsed by staff, who use the advice constructively to improve their practice.

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

Heather Weston

Her Majesty's Inspector