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Mrs Anne Springer
Acting Headteacher
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The Bank
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Dear Mrs Springer

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 09 February 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the governors and pupils who I met for their contribution to the visit.

Since the last inspection the headteacher has resigned and the deputy headteacher is acting as headteacher. A new senior leadership team was established in September 2009. Two teachers left and have been replaced in Years 6 and Year 1. The number of pupils on the roll of the school has increased steadily.

As a result of the inspection on 25 and 26 February 2008, the school was asked to

- improve procedures for evaluating the school's strengths and weaknesses
- increase the number of good or better lessons so that pupils make consistently good progress across the school
- strengthen assessment, particularly with regard to accelerating the progress of the more able pupils.

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.



The most significant improvement in the past year is in pupils' attainment and achievement in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2. Unvalidated results show a significant increase in the number of pupils' achieving the highest level in 2009 compared to 2008. By comparison the 2009 results in English show moderate improvement. The improvements in pupils' progress in mathematics are also reflected in the end of Key Stage 1 assessments which are broadly in line with national expectations. Overall standards by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage remain below average although children are making faster progress in developing early language and communication skills. The deepening levels of deprivation provide a significant barrier to raising attainment and the timely, intensive support from the local authority is usefully helping the school to identify more closely the steps to take to improve assessment and progress.

The school's own data and tracking information is securely focussed on identifying pupils at risk of underachievement. School assessment of individual pupils' progress and that of groups in English and mathematics is developing securely but does not extend across all subjects for all groups of pupils in order to build up a secure view of their achievement. Pupils across the school are making swifter progress in mathematics but their performance in writing is an issue in all year groups and for the more able pupils where progress is slower. More able pupils are achieving well in reading. Girls are not achieving as well as boys at all key stages and the reasons warrant further investigation.

The small amount of teaching sampled during the inspection confirms the school view that it is improving and generally meets pupils' learning needs. The investments in resources and professional development are enabling teachers to plan well sequenced tasks and implement a wider range of teaching strategies. Working walls are a consistent feature in all classrooms and they contribute well to pupils learning in English, mathematics, religious education and topic work. For example, pupils consider them a useful resource to find additional information, to remind them of specific strategies such as 'rounding up' in mathematics and as one pupil commented, 'to identify things I might use to improve my work'.

Well founded decisions to introduce one-to-one intervention and the deployment of teaching assistants to work in classrooms with small groups of lower attaining pupils are beginning to improve the school's capacity to meet the learning needs of vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and learning difficulties. For example in a one-to-one support session the teacher's specialist training and confident use of strategies helped one boy to make rapid progress to de-code words, read with understanding and write simple sentences using full stops and capital letters. School plans to extend and embed this practice more widely are promising.

The practice of bringing small numbers of able pupils into an older class for English and mathematics is working effectively to promote their progress in lessons. In two lessons observed the pupils were engaged and motivated by tasks that challenged

their thinking. More able pupils are beginning to make connections to their learning in other subjects and teachers' planning could usefully promote this even further.

In discussions pupils recognise they are making better progress particularly where teaching is more exciting and active. Pupils know they have individual and in some cases class targets and have a sound understanding of the progress they are making. Good examples of well focussed learning targets, marking and advice about the next steps to take to meet their target are reflected in some pupils' books. This is not consistent across all classes. In lessons most pupils have a good understanding of what they have to do and some can relate this to previous lessons and topic work. Peer assessment is at very early stages. This practice is well modelled in Year 6 and might usefully be shared more widely across the school.

Whilst most pupils are developing good attitudes and enjoy coming to school this is not uniform. Attendance rates are below average and rates of persistent absentees are high and this has a negative impact on achievement.

The school have moved quickly to implement a planned programme of self-evaluation. The acting headteacher demonstrates a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. School plans focus tightly on a small number of priorities to raise achievement. Together with the emerging good practice in teaching and improved results in 2009 the school are demonstrating satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement. Middle leaders are clear about their new roles in monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress. With the support of consultants they are better informed of their role in quality assuring teaching and learning. Governors are well informed and procedures to safeguard pupils are in place. Closer working with subject leaders and classes is beginning to support them in finding out for themselves how new developments are taking root. This is a useful step to enable them to exercise their responsibilities to challenge and support

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector