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Mrs J Gott
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Gott

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 16 June 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass my thanks to the staff and pupils who met with me as well.

Since the last inspection there have been a number of staff changes. A new deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2008 and a new headteacher joined in January 2009. Overall staffing levels have been reduced with three fewer teaching assistants. Three teachers have joined, two to replace others who have left and one to cover a maternity leave. The senior leadership team has been widened to include the English coordinator/Key Stage 1 leader, the mathematics/Key Stage 2 leader, the special educational needs coordinator and the business manager.

As a result of the inspection on 25 and 26 June 2008 the school was asked to:

- raise standards by Year 6, including supporting more able pupils in mathematics
- improve the quality of pupils' writing; ensure that monitoring and evaluation of provision make greater impact, including on strategic planning
- sharpen the use of assessment information to set targets for the school and for individual pupils.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made inadequate progress in making improvements and inadequate progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Pupils' attainment has fluctuated since the last inspection and their achievement remains satisfactory. The majority of pupils enjoy school, behave well and have good



attitudes to learning. Progress in lessons is satisfactory but teaching does not secure sustained good progress. Children continue to make a sound start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Attainment in Key Stage 1, as measured by last year's end-of-key-stage assessments in reading, writing and mathematics, declined markedly and was below national averages. These pupils made satisfactory progress because the year group contained an above average number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Currently, Year 2 pupils are making satisfactory progress from their starting points and their attainment is in line with the national average. In Key Stage 2, results in last year's assessment tests for Year 6 pupils rose, notably in English. Here attainment was above average. In mathematics there was some improvement, although attainment remained broadly average. In science, attainment was above average, as it had been the year before. These results represented good overall progress during Key Stage 2. However, the progress made by current Year 6 pupils has been slower because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Their attainment is lower than that of last year's group and their progress has been satisfactory over time.

While some effective steps have been taken to support more able pupils in achieving more, the impact has been patchy. Opportunities for more able Year 6 pupils to study mathematics at a secondary school helped raise the proportion achieving higher levels in tests last year. In English, the proportion exceeding the level expected also rose because of effective teaching. However, the school has not been able to sustain these improvements, so that more able pupils in the current Year 6 have not all made sufficient progress. Lessons seen during the inspection did not consistently provide more challenging material so as to move them on at a good pace. In particular, too few higher order questions were asked by teachers during discussions, group-based tasks did not always extend pupils enough and teachers did not always check their progress well enough.

The impact of work to improve pupils' writing has also been inconsistent. More writing in cross-curricular projects and initiatives such as 'talk for writing' have been introduced but have yet to yield sustained higher standards. Pupils enjoy making links between subjects and writing in a wider range of contexts, but do not routinely address their literacy targets, for example, when writing in a historical context. The organisation of their work, in folders and books, is too complex, hindering them in taking ownership of their work. There are too many worksheets which do not allow pupils to plan the format, for example, of topic folders. There are some examples of high quality presentation of written work, but this is not consistent and presentation is poor in some classes.

Systems for monitoring the quality of provision have been reorganised and offer better potential to improve it. They now include more regular observation of lessons, reference to assessment information and scrutiny of pupils' work. Widening the senior leadership team has rightly engaged more leaders in monitoring activities. Although there has been training for observers, including paired observation, the quality of monitoring is inconsistent in driving improvement in teaching and it

remains satisfactory overall. Lesson observations do not always identify the most important areas requiring improvement, or reflect back to action points identified for each teacher. Strategic development plans place too little emphasis on improving teaching and do not express a vision for good teaching. Pupils' progress is tracked more regularly over time in order to monitor teaching and identify underachievement. Recently introduced 'pupil progress' meetings are starting to pinpoint where extra support or changes in teaching are required but are too recent to have made an impact. Considerable efforts have been made to moderate teachers' judgements of pupils' attainment, but some data entered onto tracking documents are inaccurate, undermining their validity in monitoring progress.

Targets are now set for pupils for the end of each key stage, although there is further to go in ensuring they are securely challenging and based on accurate attainment data. The targets set for the school to achieve are not cited in the strategic development plan, making it difficult for governors to monitor the progress made. Too many aspirations in the plan are without measurable outcomes for pupils. Teachers are more aware of the levels pupils should be achieving but not all use this knowledge to ensure lessons provide appropriate challenge for all. Pupils mostly know their targets in English and mathematics and a new system of writing these on cards is helping. However, pupils are not independent enough in deciding what to do to achieve them and teachers sometimes miss opportunities to help pupils think for themselves. This includes marking where teachers often work hard to provide guidance for improvement but do not always ask pupils to respond to it.

The senior leadership team, led by the headteacher, demonstrates satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement, as seen at the last inspection. Effective steps have been taken to remedy a deficit budget, including through reducing staffing. Progress in establishing systems for better monitoring and target setting is clear, and the team is well motivated to move the school forward. Nevertheless they have yet to apply these systems with sufficient rigour to make a sustained impact on the areas identified for improvement, principally pupils' achievement.

The local authority has provided a wide range of support for some aspects of the school's work, such as through visits by consultants to support the 'talk for writing' initiative and for those new to leadership positions. Nevertheless, this has not made enough impact on the school's internal capacity to improve so that its overall effectiveness remains unchanged.

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

Stephen Long
Her Majesty's Inspector