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Mrs S Mapplebeck
Headteacher
The Edmunds Primary School
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Worsbrough Bridge
Barnsley
South Yorkshire
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Dear Mrs Mapplebeck

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 02 February 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information you provided during my visit. In particular, I would like to thank the pupils from Year 5 and Year 6 who gave up part of their lunchtime to tell me their views of the school.

At the time of the previous inspection, the school did not have a deputy headteacher. The current holder of that post was appointed shortly after the February 2008 inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 05 and 06 February 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science throughout the school
- develop the leadership and management skills of all teachers who have specific responsibilities so they play a greater part in leading whole-school initiatives and raising achievement
- provide more opportunities for pupils to use their basic skills across a range of subjects.

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.



Pupils' attainment in both key stages remains significantly below the national average as it was at the time of the previous inspection. However, most aspects of the 2009 national assessments for Key Stage 1 show a slight improvement on the assessments for 2007. The exception is in mathematics, where results fell slightly. The 2009 national test results for Key Stage 2 show a generally similar pattern of slight improvement. However, at this key stage, the improvement in mathematics results is significant and the school's results are now below, rather than well below, average. The 2009 results indicate that pupils' long-term progress is broadly the same as it was at the time of the inspection but with markedly better progress in mathematics.

The school's tracking information for Year 6 shows a pattern in pupils' progress in mathematics which matches that of the previous cohort, but there is evidence of better progress than last year in English. This improvement is reflected in lessons in Years 5 and 6, where there are examples of particularly challenging and engaging teaching of literacy.

Pupils' progress in their lessons and written work is in many respects similar to that at time of the previous inspection. Pupils make good progress when the class is calm, pupils are interested in the topic and they are all provided with tasks that are suitably demanding. Progress is satisfactory when the pace is slightly slow or the activities for some groups are too easy. However, there are indications of improvement. Pupils are becoming more knowledgeable about the next steps in their learning. The use of 'narrative therapy' in the Early Years Foundation Stage is particularly successful in helping to overcome significant weaknesses in some pupils' speaking skills when they start school. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and lower attainers are particularly well supported in lessons and their learning is now often good. The school is aware that teachers do not always provide enough challenge for higher attainers and that a key area for further improvement is ensuring that these pupils make good, rather than satisfactory, progress.

The school's targets for its test results are suitably challenging and it met most of the targets for pupils reaching Level 4 in 2009. However, it did not meet the targets for pupils reaching the higher levels in mathematics and science.

The school has made good progress in increasing the involvement of other teachers with leadership responsibilities in helping to move the school forward. Subject leaders have responded enthusiastically to opportunities to develop their skills and they are fully involved in monitoring the work of the school. Beyond that, other teachers have better understanding of their responsibility for the progress of their own classes and they appreciate the importance of making good use of the information provided by the tracking system.

The school has improved its curriculum and the range of topics has increased. Pupils speak highly of their work on the Victorian home, particularly in relation to what life used to be like in their local area. Most topics now include plenty of opportunities for pupils to use their literacy skills. Pupils use information and communication technology to carry out research and also to present their findings. Opportunities to use numeracy skills have been identified and are increasing, though these are not always as challenging as they might be.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and leaders are well aware of where further improvement is needed. The integrated support plan correctly identifies priorities and indicates good strategies for overcoming weaknesses, though the criteria for success are sometimes rather vague. Despite the better test results in 2009, the school has not yet established a secure, longer-term track record of improvement. Therefore, although the school is now better placed for further improvement than it was, its progress in this respect is satisfactory rather than good.

The local authority has provided teachers with several opportunities for professional development. Some have been very effective, notably the guidance on assessing pupils' progress, but others have been less useful. The school particularly values the 'hands on' support and encouragement of the local authority school support officer.

This monitoring visit included a check on the school's safeguarding procedures and found them to be secure and meeting current requirements.

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

Christine Harrison
Additional inspector