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Juliet Benis
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Benis

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Ambler Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 29 September 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the members of staff whose lessons I observed and the group of pupils who spoke to me.

All but one of the class teachers have joined the school since it was last inspected.

As a result of the inspection in June 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement, which are set out in the annex to this letter. The school's success in improving attendance rates was also evaluated.

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

Over the past year, pupils' progress has speeded up a good deal and attainment has begun to rise in all key stages, including the Early Years Foundation Stage. At the end of Year 2, the proportion of pupils who reached the level expected for their age rose markedly in reading, writing and mathematics. The results of national tests for eleven-year-olds also showed a substantial improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in English, and a more modest rise in mathematics. The results show that the school is successfully closing the gap on the national figures. The proportion of pupils attaining higher levels remained relatively small in comparison with last year's national figures at both key stages, however. Closing this



attainment gap will be a vital step towards ensuring that pupils' achievement is good, rather than satisfactory.

The value added to pupils' learning by the school over the course of Key Stage 2 has also increased substantially and has reversed a declining trend. This also confirms that the pupils in last year's Year 6 made considerable progress to regain the ground that they had lost in earlier years and then build on this. The school's data show that across Key Stage 2 pupils are making progress at a good, and sometimes outstanding, rate.

The teachers and support staff have responded positively to initiatives to improve the quality of marking and to involve pupils more closely in checking for themselves how well they are doing. There is a good degree of consistency from class to class in the way learning intentions and what pupils must do in order to be successful are shared with pupils and in the way work is marked. Pupils said that these success criteria were helpful to them, as they knew exactly what they were supposed to achieve in each lesson. The success criteria include not only what pupils need to do in their written work, but the way that they need to behave in order to maximise their learning; for example, talking in pairs or working collaboratively in groups. Pupils' work is marked regularly and in some detail. Pupils are given praise and encouragement and their next steps are highlighted. Sometimes teachers make requests or pose questions as part of their marking, but there are relatively few instances of pupils' response to this.

Observations in lessons during this inspection confirmed the senior leaders' judgements that teaching is generally of good quality. Teachers go to great lengths to include a range of visual and aural stimuli to fire pupils' imaginations in literacy lessons, and use technology effectively in their lessons to enhance their teaching and pupils' learning. Teachers' lesson plans show how the work will be adapted, or additional support provided, so that the needs of different groups of pupils are catered for. This usually works well. However, in one lesson the work was too easy for many pupils and they marked time, rather than moving on to the next step. In Years 5 and 6, pupils work alongside others of similar ability rather than age in their mathematics lessons. They say that this is helping them to do better.

Staff have been tenacious in their efforts to improve attendance. Overall attendance rates have risen and are approaching the national figure. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is now very few.

Strong and effective leadership underpins the school's improvements. Much has been achieved in a relatively short time, but there is an evident determination to continue. Leaders' expectations of both pupils and staff are appropriately high, and the way forward is clearly set out. Rigorous and frequent monitoring helps ensure the consistency of approach noted above. The school has worked well in partnership with the local authority. Support has been targeted at where it is most needed and the local authority's interventions are rightly enhancing, rather than driving,

improvement. The rate and amount of progress that the school has made so far indicate that a scaling back of external support is an appropriate next step.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2009

- Match work in lessons to pupils' different abilities, particularly to ensure that more-able pupils are extended and challenged.
- Ensure that all pupils understand what it is they are expected to learn in lessons so that they can better gauge for themselves what they have learnt and the progress they are making.
- Give all pupils clear guidance through marking that shows them what they need to do to improve their work.