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Hazel Pulley
Headteacher
Parkfield Primary School
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Dear Mrs Pulley

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when Martin James and I carried out an unannounced inspection of your school on Tuesday 8 December 2009. Please pass on my thanks to your chair of governors for arranging to come in and talk to me at such short notice.

Since the last Section5 inspection in November 2008, five members of staff have left to retire or follow careers abroad, and nine new staff have arrived, all newly qualified teachers.

As a result of the inspection on 5-6 November 2008, the school was asked to:

- Ensure that pupils in all year groups make good progress, especially in Key Stage 1;
- Improve curriculum planning so that the work closely matches the differing needs and abilities of learners; and
- Strengthen provision for pupils who have a home language or languages other than English, particularly by encouraging them to speak more in lessons.

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

As a result of the 2008 inspection, the school has placed much more focus on measuring the progress made by different groups of pupils. School data confirms that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are now making quicker progress, especially in language, communication and thinking; shape, space and measures; and knowledge and understanding. More children are attaining expected standards at the end of the Reception class. This has been as a result of radical changes to the



building and learning environment. At Key Stage 1, the 2009 national test results indicate that the downward trend of attainment in 2008 has been halted. Whilst attainment is still below national averages, pupils made better progress in mathematics and writing and to a lesser extent in reading. The introduction of a commercial scheme of work for English with a focus on phonics has ensured more consistency in the teaching of literacy, and initially has had more impact on writing than on reading which remains an issue across the school. Attainment remains below the national average and declined further in the 2009 Key Stage 2 tests, largely due to weaker performance, again in English. However, joint lesson observations conducted with senior staff as part of this inspection demonstrate that pupils are now making better progress in Key Stage 2. This notwithstanding, they still make quicker progress in mathematics and science than they do in English. Pakistani pupils make consistently slower progress across all subjects compared with other groups. The school is developing a partnership arrangement with a neighbouring school to support Somali pupils, and it is also planned to further support Pakistani pupils, the largest group represented in the school. Inspectors observed 21 lessons during the visit which confirm that pupil progress is accelerating across the school since the last inspection. Behaviour in lessons is good.

The school was also asked to improve curriculum planning so that the work more closely matched the differing needs and abilities of pupils. All staff have worked hard under the direction of the headteacher to explore new programmes and experiences to enrich the curriculum and appeal to all pupils. Initiatives such as: zoning the curriculum within the Early Years; developing the Forest School initiative with more visits out to other schools and wooded localities; the International Schools Award; the phased introduction of commercial schemes of work; clearer understanding of how to plan using the literacy and numeracy frameworks; and a stronger focus on developing an enquiry-based curriculum, are all examples of how leaders and managers are expanding the curriculum to stimulate the needs of all learners. It is too early to judge the impact of these curriculum actions in meeting the needs of individual pupils, although early evidence suggests that the Forest School initiative for example, is exciting and motivating more Year 2 pupils to speak readily about their new experiences. Their vocabulary is also developing. Staff have been using a revised planning format, initially for three days of the week, which encourages them to change and annotate their planning in response to on-going assessment. Whilst this has ensured a consistent approach to planning, and is developing the confidence of staff to use assessment on a more regular basis, there is still a lack of clarity about the precise learning intentions in some lesson planning. There is however, a stronger focus on meeting the needs of all pupils in each class, although some more able Key Stage 2 pupils felt they could be even further challenged. Lesson observations and pupil discussions indicate that all pupils know their targets and what they have to do to improve. Marking is now more consistent throughout the school.

In order to strengthen provision for the large majority of pupils in the school who have a home language or languages other than English by encouraging them to

speaking more in lessons, leaders and managers have developed many initiatives throughout the school, all of which are having a positive impact by encouraging pupils to speak more. One of the key actions and successes has been to raise the profile of speaking across the school. All teachers and teaching assistants now feel more able to plan speaking and listening activities and feel reassured that time spent on these activities is to be actively encouraged. Staff are developing their confidence in being able to assess progress in speaking and listening and deciding on the next steps by using a really useful speaking assessment tool devised by senior leaders. There are now many more opportunities for speaking and listening throughout the school: The new Early Years Foundation Stage environment and use of zoned areas has stimulated more speaking, as has the greater use of role play areas in Key Stage 1; curriculum initiatives such as 'Talk for Writing' and preparation for the 'Big Write' have also been influential. Speaking and listening are now seen as part of normal lessons and talk partners, circle time, and talk groups as well as conversation in response to the increased number of external visits have also encouraged talking. Staff now focus questioning more on individual pupils with a 'no-hands up' approach, and are also correcting speech and asking for repetition where required. Pupils identified for additional help for their speaking have received focused support and due to the success of these interventions have been removed from the Special Education Needs (SEN) register. Following a visit to BRMB, Birmingham's radio station, a recent school radio project initiative also has the potential to further develop speaking skills.

The headteacher has successfully enthused all staff with a clear vision and purpose through a number of innovative ideas, for example the shared ownership of the school development planning process. Based on the impact on attainment and progress in many areas since the last inspection, leaders and managers at all levels have demonstrated a good capacity to embed ambition and drive improvement at Parkfield Primary School. There is now a secure management system in place that has produced an accurate self-assessment of the school's effectiveness which sets suitably challenging targets for improvement. Ensuing action is clearly documented and shared with all staff. Regular, measurable milestones allow staff and governors the opportunity to monitor progress towards challenging targets.

Safeguarding requirements were routinely checked as part of this inspection and judged to be robust, as at the 2008 inspection, the school fulfils its duty to safeguard children.

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

Clive Kempton HMI
Her Majesty's Inspector