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14 December 2011

Ms Chris Jenkin
Headteacher
West End Infant School
York Road
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Hampshire
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Dear Ms Jenkin

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of West End Infant School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 December 2011, for the time you gave to our preliminary meeting and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the governors, staff and pupils who took the time to meet with me during the day.

Since the previous inspection two new teachers have joined the school. There has been a steady increase in the number of pupils joining the school who are from Asian and Eastern European heritages. Many of these pupils are at an early stage of learning English. There has also been a rise in the proportion of families who are claiming their entitlement to free school meals. The local authority is consulting on a proposal to amalgamate West End Infant School with a local junior school.

As a result of the inspection on 9–10 June 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement, which are set out in the annex to this letter.

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.

Teachers' assessments indicate that attainment in reading at the end of Year 2 rose in 2011 and was in line with national averages, recovering from a dip in 2010. Attainment in writing also rose, but average point scores remained slightly below national averages. Attainment in mathematics fell over the same period. Overall, pupils' achievement remains satisfactory. Children continue to make a sound start in

the Early Years Foundation Stage and outcomes are improving, though there are few children who reach above-average levels by the end of the Reception year compared to other schools in the local authority.

The school is organised into five mixed-age classes and there is a wide spread of ability and maturity in every class as well as a number of pupils learning English as an additional language. Work seen in books during the inspection showed too many instances where a writing task was the same for all pupils, with some clearly struggling to complete their work, even with support. Children in the Reception/Year 1 classes show that they understand the purpose of the activities set for them. In the lessons seen during the inspection, the match of tasks to different groups was better in the Early Years Foundation Stage than elsewhere in the school. In a Year 1/2 class a group of pupils were using a mathematics software programme on the computers, but the activity was not pitched at the right level and these pupils did not make sufficient progress in the lesson. A group of boys lost concentration during whole-class teaching because they could not see the board and were not involved in discussion. In another class, a group of pupils were not engaged in their learning because the task set was not appropriate for them.

The headteacher visits classes to observe teaching and there have been improvements in the way that these visits are recorded. Clear feedback is given to teachers and action points are followed up. However, observation records show that not all teachers readily accept constructive criticism of their practice. The school's judgement of the quality of teaching is based on evidence gathered in termly lesson observations and does not take sufficient account of the quality of teachers' planning, pupils' work in books or levels of progress over time. The quality of teaching observed throughout the school during the inspection was satisfactory overall. Progress in lessons is generally satisfactory, but teaching does not yet secure sustained good progress in all classes and in all subjects.

The school has taken some steps to improve pupils' attainment in writing. For example, teachers have used visits to the local park and a local arts centre to stimulate writing. Drama activities are used to rehearse spoken language and story structure. There are now more opportunities for pupils to write in different subjects such as history and geography. Teachers try to ensure that there is purpose for writing. For example, children in the Reception classes wrote 'get well' cards for Humpty Dumpty.

The marking policy is updated annually and the latest version was introduced in September 2011. The policy does not give sufficient guidance to teachers on how they should respond to spelling errors, especially those that show that a pupil is not applying their knowledge of letters and sounds effectively. The marking policy is not being applied consistently across the school and some work is left unmarked, particularly topic work. Target sheets are stuck into pupils' books, but the majority of these are blank and do not inform the pupils as to how they are progressing in

meeting their targets. Teachers' comments in pupils' books do not relate to the targets and pupils do not have sufficient awareness of their next steps in learning.

The school has been working with the local authority education welfare officer to improve attendance. There was a slight improvement last year, but overall levels of attendance remained low. So far this year, attendance levels are slightly above those recorded for the same period last year. The school's attendance officer is rigorous in following up on absences and notifies the headteacher if the absence remains unexplained. The school is taking some actions to promote good attendance through the use of rewards. For example, in every 'Celebration Assembly', which parents are invited to, the class with the best weekly attendance is rewarded with a star which is displayed in the main corridor and a toy bear which is kept in the classroom for the week. Promoting good attendance remains a high priority for school leaders and governors.

The senior leadership team led by the headteacher and deputy headteacher does not currently demonstrate better capacity for sustained improvement. School self-evaluation is more rigorous and the school plan is focused on appropriate priorities, but the targets for improvement in pupils' attainment are not challenging enough. For example, there are no targets for pupils to reach Level 3 by the end of Year 2. Expectations of pupil progress are too low and do not offer sufficient challenge. There is too much inconsistency in practice across the school. Overall, school leaders have not had enough impact on addressing the key areas for improvement from the previous inspection.

The headteacher has received effective support from the local authority to improve the rigour of self-evaluation and has worked with other schools in the locality.

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

Melanie Knowles
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2010

- Raise pupils' attainment by:
 - improving the match of tasks to different groups, especially in writing
 - develop further the opportunities for writing in other subjects
 - providing better feedback from marking about the next steps in pupils' learning
 - in the Early Years Foundation Stage, ensuring that children fully understand the purpose of the activities set for them.
- Improve the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation through a sharper focus on judging the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress.
- Improve the school's attendance rate to at least average by concerted action to reduce the number of persistent absentees.