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Mrs Anna Upton
Chaucer Junior School
Cranmer Street
Ilkeston
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Dear Mrs Upton

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Chaucer Junior School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Wednesday 2 March, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the staff and Chair of Governors for their time and courtesy. I would like to particularly thank the pupils for the most enjoyable time I spent talking with them.

Since the school's last inspection a new headteacher has been appointed, taking up post in September 2010.

As a result of the inspection on 13 October 2009 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 satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Over the last three years, attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has been broadly in line with national averages. Results of national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2010 show that attainment in mathematics has risen from the previous two years and is above average. Attainment in writing dipped, but overall attainment in English remained broadly average. The percentage of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics was above national averages. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress have recently been reviewed. Lessons observed jointly with senior leaders confirm that these procedures are having a positive impact in ensuring better improvement. Progress for all pupils, including the more able, is beginning to accelerate. Consequently, attainment is rising steadily.

Re-organisation of classes since September 2010 means that pupils are now taught in mixed-ability classes for all subjects. This is having a positive effect as teachers know their pupils well and are able to match work more closely to individual pupils' needs. The school is developing its thematic approach to the curriculum and effectively enabling pupils to apply and practise their basic skills across a range of subjects. For example, younger pupils enjoyed writing dragon poems, linking with their topic work on dragons and dungeons. This is still at a relatively early stage of development and the school recognises that it requires further evaluation to ensure that all pupils, particularly the more able, are sufficiently challenged across all subjects. Other recent developments to the curriculum, such as the introduction of 'Learn to Learn', are supporting pupils in becoming more independent learners.

New, robust systems for assessment and tracking pupils' progress have been in place since September 2010. The school is beginning to use this information to support improvement through identifying group and individual needs more accurately and helping teachers to adjust lesson plans and individual targets accordingly. However, staff are not yet consistently using assessment information to structure the main tasks for pupils well enough to meet all of their needs. As a result, sometimes learning slows because pupils are struggling or because they are not sufficiently challenged. The school is making effective use of improvement targets for pupils in English and mathematics. Discussion with pupils confirmed that these are supporting them in knowing the next steps in their learning, in helping to increase their rates of progress and in providing them with a clearer understanding of what they need to do to improve further. Pupils behave extremely well, persevere with their work and show a pride in their achievements.

The headteacher's drive and ambition to provide the best possible learning experiences and promote high expectations has been the key to increasing levels of progress. Morale is currently high and staff are working well together as a team with the clear aim of ensuring more rapid progress and raising attainment for all pupils. Planning for improvement is sound and there is evidence that attainment is beginning to rise. However, senior leaders know that there is still much to be done and to this end they have set challenging targets for both pupils and themselves. Senior leaders are well supported by capable governors, who demonstrate that they are increasingly monitoring and challenging in equal measure.

Reports show that the school benefits from the challenge and support received from the regular visits made by the local authority school improvement partner.

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

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise standards in English and mathematics, particularly those of the more able pupils, by the end of the current school year, ensuring that:
 - expectations of attainment for all are ambitious
 - the progress of pupils of all abilities is closely monitored.
- Improve the continuity of pupils' learning throughout the school, ensuring that:
 - class teachers have sufficient time with all their pupils to plan their learning effectively
 - the school's curriculum planning identifies clearly how skills and knowledge are to be developed progressively across subjects.
- Accelerate the progress of pupils who are not achieving as well as they should, ensuring that:
 - tracking systems clearly identify suitably challenging targets for individual pupils
 - assessment information is used effectively to plan lessons that are challenging and achievable for all pupils.