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Mr P Stephenson
Advisory headteacher
Mereworth Community Primary School
The Street
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Dear Mr Stephenson

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you, your staff and governors gave when I inspected your school on 18 May 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during my visit.

Since the school was last inspected, there have been significant changes to the school's context. The headteacher at the time of the inspection left in September 2009 after a prolonged period of absence, and two advisory headteachers from the local authority have covered the role since that time. A new permanent headteacher has been appointed recently and will take up post in June 2010. The senior leadership team was restructured and made smaller, with a permanent deputy headteacher taking up post in June 2009. Four teaching staff and several teaching assistants have left and been replaced since the inspection.

The governing body has undergone considerable revision. A new chair of governors took over soon after the inspection and, after many changes, a large majority of the governing body is new. It has adopted a committee system which is more focused on school improvement and effectiveness as well as budget strategy and management.

As a result of the inspection on 12 June 2008, the school was asked to:

- implement a more robust system for tracking pupils' progress throughout the school
- sharpen the role of the governing body in checking the school's work and contributing to its further development
- improve communications and relationships between governors, staff and parents.



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.

My visits to a sample of lessons confirmed that the school's analysis of information on pupils' performance is accurate and shows that pupils' attainment is above average. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is consistently above average over time in English, mathematics and science. This represents satisfactory progress from pupils' above-average starting points on entry to the school. Teachers have good expectations of their pupils, both in terms of behaviour and performance. Pupils know this and respond by trying to do their best in lessons. Behaviour in all lessons visited was very good. Good teaching is well planned to include a range of strategies that make the lessons interesting and enjoyable. In the best and often outstanding lessons, pupils are highly involved in their learning and totally engrossed in the challenging and demanding activities. Relationships in lessons are excellent and pupils are keen to learn and contribute, especially where they are given opportunities to work together and take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils' individual progress is now tracked and analysed carefully in all year groups. Class teachers and their learning support assistants meet six times a year with the headteacher to analyse performance and decide when to intervene with extra support if individual progress is too slow. This strategy is starting to impact on improving achievement. Teachers now have a clearer understanding of the progress their pupils make and what they need to do to improve.

The new chair of governors and governing body now have the capacity to meet the school's needs and they are more rigorous in evaluating the school. They have worked hard to raise and improve the profile of the school with both the parents and the local community. One very successful strategy was to consult all parents by letter regarding the new headteacher appointment. A large majority of parents responded to this approach and a summary of their views made a significant contribution to the appointment process. Parents are keen to be involved in the school and vacancies for parent governors that were hard to fill in the past now attract several applicants. Communications with parents have improved significantly. For example, almost all parents have asked to be involved in an innovative system introduced recently for contacting all parents by text.

There is now a much closer working relationship between the school and its governing body. Regular visits to lessons encourage teamwork and a strong focus on improving pupils' progress. Local authority advisory headteachers have provided good support for the school as well as secure cover for the vacant headteacher post. This support has helped to create a shared vision for improvement along with a clear sense of direction that will help the new headteacher to take the school forward. The school is now well placed to continue to improve.



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 Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

