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28 February 2008

Ms Maxine Purdy
Seaburn Dene Primary School
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Dear Ms Purdy

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 27 February 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I also appreciated the time given by the chair of governors to meet with me and talk about the improvements since the previous inspection in September 2006. Please, also, extend my thanks to the school improvement partner, the teachers and pupils who met with me.

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to the organisation of the Foundation Stage. A new unit has been established and a new manager appointed. Several members of staff have been on long term sick leave, but the school has recently stabilised staffing and has a full complement of full time permanent staff. The deputy head teacher is now responsible for teaching in Years 3 and 4. A new member of staff has joined the school to teach the Year 5 class. Temporary managers have been put in place to lead on developments in Years 5 and 6.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection in September 2006, the school was asked to:

- Increase the achievement of pupils, especially higher attaining pupils.
- Make more effective use of assessment information to provide work that is closely matched to pupils' learning needs.
- Develop the provision in the Foundation Stage so that it is more focused on learning.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

Children's attainment on entry to the school varies from year-to-year, but is generally slightly above the levels of skills, knowledge and personal attributes expected for children starting school at five years of age. The 2007 test results showed that overall standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 were above average. The standards reached by girls were particularly high. Pupils' progress throughout the school is broadly average in English, mathematics and science. The school provided sufficient evidence to show that, since September 2006, a combination of better assessment and more effective teaching has led to a larger proportion of children making better progress in these subjects.

The school is aware that further improvements to assessment, target setting, and teaching are necessary and is being well supported by the local authority to develop these processes. There is an appropriate focus on improving the progress of higher attaining pupils. The school now accurately identifies pupils whose progress in the core subjects is not what is expected and has put in place a range of effective support measures. However, these measures have been introduced recently and as yet there have been no resulting improvements in national test results. There are systems in place to assess the achievement of pupils in subjects other than English, mathematics and science. However, these are less effective and do not allow managers to carry out an analysis of progress in particular subjects or by specific groups of pupils.

There has been good progress in improving the Foundation Stage. As suggested in the previous inspection report, an effective focus on learning has been established. There is a well organised programme that carefully balances a mixture of stimulating learning and play activities. Assessment is carried out meticulously and closely linked to each child's needs and development. Children are well prepared for their transition to Key Stage 1.

The method used to monitor the quality of teaching is accurate. It includes observations by senior staff and the local authority. The school provided compelling evidence to prove that the overall quality of teaching was satisfactory and improving. The inspector observed a range of teaching activities containing elements of good practice. For example, in the best lessons work is differentiated to challenge and meet the needs of the full range of pupils. Pupils spend the majority of their time working in small groups or pairs on stimulating practical tasks that have been closely matched to their needs and abilities. In the less successful lessons, teachers spend too long talking to or questioning the whole group. Pupils are very attentive, well behaved, and very keen to learn. Marking is done frequently but some feedback given in exercise books does not give sufficient guidance to pupils on what they need to do to improve. Homework is set frequently and appropriate work is given to pupils according to their abilities. The school is in a good position to build upon the best practice in teaching and improve learning across the school.

Pupils are very positive about attending school. Those who met with the inspector said they enjoyed their lessons, playtime and out of school clubs and activities. They are generally knowledgeable about their current levels and targets in core subjects, but do not always know what they need to do to improve. Pupils said this was a happy friendly school where bullying was very rare and they felt safe.

A self-evaluation form provided by the head teacher gives an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Appropriate action plans are in place to improve areas identified by the last inspection. However, the school development plans do not always quantify success criteria or set straightforward measurable targets. Staff are working hard to develop the school's place in the community and to support children and their families. Particularly effective work has been done to help the parents of children in the Foundation Stage develop their children's reading skills. Governors are well informed and determined to move the school forward. They realise that they need to become more involved in the self-evaluation and planning processes, as this will put them in a better position to support the leadership team and hold the school to account.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Johnson", followed by a period.

Andrew Johnson
Her Majesty's Inspector