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Miss Pat Evison
Headteacher
Holtsmere End Junior School
Shenley Road
Hemel Hempstead
HP2 7JZ

Dear Miss Evison

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Holtsmere End Junior School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 5 April 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the local authority representative, to governors and to the pupils who took the time to talk to me and contributed a great deal to the inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 30 April–1 May 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.

The school has worked hard and has been successful in ensuring that assessment and tracking of pupils' progress are more accurate. The school is able to demonstrate improvements in the progress pupils make. There are clear targets set and students in Year 6 are on track to attain National Curriculum levels in 2011 that are broadly in line with national expectations. The validated national test results for 2010 show that the percentage of pupils achieving level 4 or above and those gaining level 5 or more in English was below that found nationally. In mathematics pupils' reaching level 4 or above and those gaining level 5 or more in maths was very slightly higher than the national average. There is now much more consistent performance across all year groups. The school is analytical about the strengths in learning and where further support is needed. The school has appropriately focused its work on developing maths and English so far. There has been significant progress in developing writing skills across all year groups. During one Year 4 lesson pupils enthusiastically wrote about a mysterious doorway. The quality of their work and

creativity was impressive and the teacher was able to develop pupils' skills with focused individual feedback that provoked and prompted their thinking.

Monitoring of teaching and pupil progress tracking systems are more effective now. There is some good use of diagnostic assessments to ensure that teaching is more focused. This helps teachers to plan more effective learning opportunities for pupils of all ability ranges including the more able. Classrooms have a warm and welcoming feel with high-quality displays that support learning and celebrate successes. Positive relationships in the school between all members of the community mean that pupils enjoy learning, and their behaviour contributes a great deal to the positive learning ethos of the school. In some lessons observed pupils did not make the highest levels of progress. This was because there was too much teacher talk and not sufficient account was taken of pupils' prior knowledge, and so pupils were not always challenged enough. There was, however, some good practice in all lessons observed. Where teachers worked with small groups or on a one-to-one basis, pupils' individual progress was strong and teachers were able to assess it with much greater precision.

The senior leaders have an improving understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They have prioritised well and the school now has firmer foundations for sustained development. The headteacher has a good knowledge of the quality of teaching in the school. The governing body is becoming more effective in monitoring the work of the school. It uses a range of information to confirm its views, including that gathered from observations in the school and meetings with parents and carers and the pupils, and makes increasing use of the school's tracking data.

The school has been supported effectively by the local authority, who have provided both appropriate challenge and advice from a range of professionals. The school directs this support for itself, and the local authority has responded to the needs of the school as they arise and are requested by school leaders.

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

Paul Scott
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 30 April –1 May 2009

- Raise standards further in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) by ensuring that more able pupils do as well as they can.
- Apply more rigour to monitoring pupils' progress and the quality of teaching to ensure consistent and good progress as pupils move through the school.
- Ensure consistent challenge, especially for more able pupils, by identifying appropriate work in teachers' planning.