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Miss M Hughes
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Dear Miss Hughes

OFSTED MONITORING OF GRADE 3 SCHOOLS

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I visited your school on 28 June 2006, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit.

During the inspection of January of this year, the following areas were identified for improvement: make better use of assessment to check pupils' progress and plan further work; ensure that teaching and tasks are well matched to pupils' individual needs; ensure that priorities for future development are firmly linked to improving pupils' standards and attainment; create more opportunities to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work.

Having considered carefully all the evidence presented by the school and the local authority I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress on the issues identified.

The school responded quickly to the previous inspection report by drawing up an action plan focused on the areas identified for improvement and by securing increased support from the local authority, particularly for literacy and numeracy. However, at that time, the school faced a number of difficulties. Unavoidable and significant disruptions to staffing and governance, and uncertainty regarding the continuity of leadership all slowed the rate of improvement in the two months following the inspection. Since then an acting headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher have been appointed from within the school. They are due to take on these roles from September 2006 to follow on from the current headteacher who retires at the end of this term. These arrangements, put into place at the end of March, have provided continuity of leadership and the rate of improvement has increased. In addition, experienced staff have been appointed for September 2006.

The governing body has undergone considerable change, including a new Chair. The governors are very supportive of the improvement taking place and are keen to develop their support and monitoring roles.

The school's enthusiastic involvement in the local authority's Intensifying Support Programme (ISP) is accelerating improvement. The programme provides good support for the recently appointed acting senior leaders in their quest to ensure consistency of good practice.

An audit of provision has taken place and a Raising Attainment Plan (RAP), which encompasses further action on all four issues identified for improvement, is in place. The plan is tightly focused on raising pupils' attainment and the frequent and specific checks built into the plan, increases confidence that it will be effective.

The school has improved the frequency and nature of checks on pupils' progress. Teachers are gaining confidence in using their assessments to identify where learning is insecure and they re-visit these areas of learning, as in numeracy, for example. The RAP identifies how this improved focus on pupils' progress will become embedded and how information will be used by teachers to plan further intervention, support and challenge.

The school has analysed the tests taken by pupils this term. As a result, those in need of additional support or further challenge have been identified in each class. Areas for improvement within the curriculum have also been identified. Systems are now in place to ensure class teachers pass on assessment information to the pupils' new class teacher.

Local authority literacy and numeracy consultants have worked closely with the school to improve the quality of planning and the use of assessment to improve pupils' learning. Teachers' planning includes different strategies to help pupils to evaluate their own work. Teachers emphasise what will be learned and how success will be gauged, a process which the pupils find very helpful. But teachers do not always make sufficiently clear what more the higher attaining pupils are expected to learn especially in literacy. Suitable activities and support are more frequently identified in planning for lower attaining pupils than for those pupils who are capable of more demanding work. The RAP includes further improvements to ensure a better match of tasks to individual needs in writing, reading and mathematics. Work has already started on this, ready for next term.

Teachers' marking identifies what pupils have done well and what they need to correct or improve. Pupils find this helpful and enjoy responding to their teachers' comments. The RAP sets out the actions needed to secure this improvement and ensure consistency across the school.

Once again, I thank you, the staff, pupils and the chair of governors for the help you gave to me during my visit to your school. I wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Salter-Smith (Mrs)
Additional Inspector