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Mr B Desmond  
The Headteacher  
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24 November 2006

Dear Mr Desmond

#### OFSTED MONITORING OF SCHOOLS WITH A NOTICE TO IMPROVE

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when Deana Holdaway HMI and I visited your school on 15 November 2006. I appreciated the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information you provided before and during our visit. Please also pass on my thanks to those pupils who talked to us and to your chair of governors for his time.

As a result of the inspection in May 2006, the school was asked to address three issues:

- to use monitoring data more effectively to identify and disseminate elements of good teaching more consistently across the school
- to plan learning activities more precisely to meet the needs of individual pupils in all lessons
- to make marking and the setting of curriculum targets more effective in helping pupils improve.

Having considered carefully all the evidence presented by the school and the local authority (LA), I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress overall on these three issues.

The effective use of monitoring data is still at an early stage. It is not yet being used well enough to secure the required improvements. There have been a significant number of lesson observations undertaken and inspection criteria have been introduced. This has helped to develop a shared understanding of the features of good teaching amongst staff. However, monitoring and evaluation activities are not strategically planned or adequately prioritised.

There is still too much teaching in the school that is just satisfactory. Specific actions taken to address identified areas of weakness following lesson observations have not been swift enough. Written feedback provided is not sufficiently precise or linked to standards of attainment. Despite the effective modelling of good classroom practice by an advanced skills teacher, this has not resulted in sustained improvement in the quality of learning and teaching. Therefore, progress on this first issue has been inadequate.

The planning of learning activities to meet the needs of pupils has improved. There has been satisfactory progress made in this area. All teachers identify learning objectives at the start of lessons and most of them refer to them during the course of the lesson. However, some of the learning objectives are a description of activities rather than a focus on the learning outcome. Most teachers' planning identifies key questions and specific vocabulary and, in the best practice, teachers reinforce this vocabulary during the session. All classes have made a start on the use of wall displays to help them develop their independent learning. Teaching assistants are generally deployed well but not all are involved in the planning of lessons and some are too passive during whole class teaching. Most planning has three distinct levels of differentiation but this is not always well matched to pupils' needs. This is because not all teachers have a secure grasp of individual pupils' level of ability.

Overall, progress on improving marking and the setting of curriculum targets has been satisfactory. The school has developed a detailed marking policy. As a result, marking is more consistent and regular. Pupils are motivated by an increasing involvement in the assessment of their own work. Adults provide useful and regular feedback on pupils' learning. However, written feedback in books does not always give pupils sufficient guidance on how they can improve their work. The setting of curriculum targets is inconsistent across the school and although some pupils reported they found their targets useful, others were unclear about the target setting process. In addition, where targets are made explicit, they are not sufficiently linked with National Curriculum levels to promote and secure good achievement.

The school has received sound support from the LA. The recent primary partnership review provided clear and relevant feedback, highlighting key areas for development. The LA statement of action clearly identifies how the LA will support the school. Monitoring of planned actions is provided satisfactorily through the link adviser and a monitoring and intervention group. The evaluation of the impact of the LA action plan is less helpful. The success criteria are not sufficiently measurable to enable the LA to judge the impact of its actions effectively. It is also inaccurate in its references to 'Special Measures' rather than the school's actual category of 'Notice to Improve'.

Staff are working hard but the pace of change at the school until recently had been too slow. The senior management team has only recently recognised the urgency needed to address the significant improvements required. There remains a lack of clear, strategic planning which focuses on the immediate priorities to bring about the rapid change required.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Rockey  
Her Majesty's Inspector