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15 December 2006

Mr I Langston
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Dear Mr Langston

OFSTED MONITORING OF SCHOOLS WITH NOTICE TO IMPROVE

Thank you for the help which you, your staff and pupils gave when I inspected your school on 23 November, for the time you and Mr Williamson gave to phone discussions and for the information provided before and during my visit.

As a result of the inspection on 17 and 18 May 2006, the school was asked to look urgently at three issues: pupils' standards and rates of progress in Key Stage 2; the proportion of teaching which is good or better; and teachers' planning of lessons to challenge and support pupils of all abilities.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress on the issues for improvement.

The school has successfully adopted the strategies outlined in its improvement plan to raise standards and improve progress. Subject leaders have analysed recent test papers in detail to identify areas of strength and weaknesses in pupils' work in the core subjects. The outcomes have been used effectively to set specific targets for classes and individual pupils, and these are prominently displayed in classrooms and pupils' books. Pupils have also been carefully identified for well-focused additional support in these subjects. Pupils know their targets and are aware of what they have to do to improve their work. Older pupils are now more confident in assessing their own work and that of their peers against these targets.

At this stage in the year, the first set of school assessment data indicates that pupils in Year 6 are achieving satisfactory levels in reading and writing but less well in mathematics. Assessment data for pupils in other years shows more varied levels of achievement. Pupils' progress in the lessons observed was satisfactory overall. It is essential that the school maintains its focus on attainment in the core subjects and regular assessment of pupils' progress to ensure that all pupils achieve their targets.

The quality of teaching has improved according to the school's evidence from regular observation of lessons. Experienced teachers, new to the school this year, have settled in well and are making a strong contribution both to the quality of teaching overall and the senior leadership of the school. Teachers are now engaged effectively in observing each other's lessons and working to improve identified areas of their teaching. Relevant training and opportunities to work with teachers from other schools have been provided.

Inspectors' observations confirm the school's judgement that teaching is now satisfactory overall and improving. The school is on target to achieve the levels of good teaching outlined in its improvement plan. In the lessons seen on this visit there was good use of clear objectives for learning, questioning to encourage pupils to think, speaking and listening to share learning and effective assessment to check whether pupils understand. There are still areas for improvement in some lessons related to the pace of learning, objectives for pupils of different abilities and the use of pupils' targets.

Teachers use the newly revised planning sheets well and this has improved the quality of planning, as shown in the recent review undertaken by senior staff. In most cases, teachers' planning reflects the class targets in the core subjects. Plans have good emphasis on using a variety of assessment strategies to check whether pupils understand during the lesson and to help them shape their work. This was a strong feature of the lessons observed. Increasingly, teachers plan opportunities into lessons for pupils to assess their own work and that of their peers; older pupils say they enjoy this and that it helps them to learn. Teachers' plans usually ensure that lower-attaining pupils have work matched to their ability but, although there are similar examples for higher-attaining pupils, this is an area that should be strengthened so that these pupils are consistently challenged and enabled to move on at sufficient pace.

The school continues to receive good support from the local authority through specific training and visits from specialist staff. Regular review and support from the local authority has enabled the school to build more effective systems for monitoring and evaluating its progress independently. The school is also making good use of its links with other local schools to share good practice and develop relevant training for teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg
Her Majesty's Inspector