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Mrs S Scott
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Dear Mrs Scott

OFSTED MONITORING OF SCHOOLS WITH NOTICE TO IMPROVE

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when Allan Torr HMI and I inspected your school on 28 November 2006, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during our visit. Please also thank, on our behalf, the other people with whom we met.

As a result of the inspection in May 2006 the school was asked to raise teachers' expectations and improve the match of learning activities so that pupils are challenged more. It was also asked to improve the monitoring of teaching and learning and to act on the outcomes of these. The school was also asked to review teaching time and to monitor how effectively it is used.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress.

The school's own tracking records show that the rate of progress made by the pupils has increased. This is confirmed by inspectors' observations of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work. Work is better matched to the needs of the pupils because they have been put into ability groups for English and mathematics across Key Stages 1 and 2 and additionally for science in Years 5 and 6. Teachers' planning has improved and the best further identifies objectives for groups of pupils within lessons. Clear targets are set for all pupils who know and understand these.

Published schemes of work form the basis of the curriculum in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and these are fittingly adapted to match the needs of the pupils. Planning for the work of teaching assistants has also improved and results in them being effective in both supporting individuals and teaching small groups. Half-termly assessments have been established and these put the school in a good position to track progress and to identify and respond to underachievement. The first of these shows that more pupils are on course to achieve higher standards than last year and that pupils' achievements are better in mathematics and reading than in writing. Work has begun to complement the school's tracking system with a commercial database, which will provide a useful annual evaluation of progress.

The school has improved its monitoring of teaching and learning, which is now more regular and systematic. Training has ensured consistency of judgements and this has been complemented by some joint observations with the local authority's consultants. Further, there is a plan for all teachers to observe high quality teaching from one of their peers. A form for recording lesson observations helpfully identifies strengths and areas for development but the omission of an overall written judgement on the quality of teaching and learning is a weakness. Subject teachers have their own action plans, which emanate from the monitoring of planning and pupils' work and, in the case of English and mathematics, lesson observations. The senior staff know the strengths in teaching and have made some fitting responses to address the areas for development. However, the actions would be more coherent if they fed into the school improvement plan. The school has taken on board the advice of the local authority in forming a focus group to monitor progress on the school improvement plan and having a governor as a member of the group is adding some helpful challenge to the school.

The school has reviewed the allocation of time to subjects and more time has been created for teaching, which now exceeds the minimum recommended nationally. This has been duly monitored by the headteacher to confirm that it has facilitated a swift start to the day and is being used productively.

The local authority has provided a good range of quality support for the school, as well as appropriate challenge through its monitoring arrangements. The school has responded enthusiastically to this input and has embraced the advice and guidance offered.

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

Yours sincerely

Eric Craven
Her Majesty's Inspector