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14th September 2006

Humberston Comprehensive School
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Dear Ms Sanderson,

OFSTED MONITORING OF GRADE 3 SCHOOLS

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I visited your school on 13 September 2006, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to those students and staff who met with me and to your chair of Governors for the time she gave.

As a result of its inspection in September 2005 the school was asked to address four areas for improvement: the rigour with which teaching and learning are evaluated; systems for checking students' progress; how the school sets clear priorities and timescales and checks whether its actions have been successful and that requirements for religious education are met.

Having considered carefully all the evidence presented by the school and the local authority together with evidence from Ofsted data, I am of the opinion that at this time, the school is making inadequate progress on the issues identified at the last inspection.

The school gained specialist status in mathematics and computing in the summer term 2006. The work involved in preparing a successful bid detracted from the school's improvement work and adversely affected the progress made on issues relating to school improvement. Senior leaders acknowledge this slippage and have the areas for improvement firmly at the forefront of their priorities for the coming term.

Progress on improving the quality of teaching and learning has been too slow. Points for development in lesson observations records, particularly from the two terms post-inspection, lack the sharpness necessary to enable teachers to make a real qualitative leap in their classroom practice. The outcomes from observations have not been used effectively to remove some of the inconsistencies identified in teaching and learning in September 2005. Brief visits to several lessons chosen by the school confirmed that good practice is

evident, but so too are lessons in which the differing needs of pupils are not met as well as they should be. Provisional results from the 2006 national curriculum tests and examinations show standards overall have not risen compared to 2005. This runs counter to the trend seen in the majority of secondary schools in the local authority.

New management arrangements for teaching and learning, established in the summer term 2006, have done much to counteract the inertia of the previous two terms. It is too soon to see the impact of recently implemented whole-school strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The school has established appropriate systems for checking students' progress. Common assessment points are planned through the year and assessment outcomes will be reviewed against individual student targets. This new system is widely understood by staff and pupils. There is more for the school to do to ensure teachers use the outcomes of progress tracking in planning lessons, to better meet the needs of all students.

Inadequacies in religious education and spiritual development for older pupils remain. To address this, the school is planning to appoint a new teacher from January 2007.

The school's systems for monitoring and evaluating its work remain a cause for concern. Whilst the school has an accurate view of its weaknesses, it is less sure of the impact of many of the actions intended to address them. The headteacher and senior leaders plan to review how they set priorities, measure success and evaluate outcomes as a matter of urgency. The headteacher has realigned the roles and responsibilities of the senior management team and a new deputy headteacher, with the remit to move forward teaching and learning, was appointed at the start of the summer term 2006. The school has considerable ground to make up, but it is now better placed to do so.

Yours sincerely

Cathy Kirby
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools