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Mr T McBeath
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Dear Mr McBeath

OFSTED MONITORING OF SCHOOLS WITH NOTICE TO IMPROVE

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 30 January 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I would also like to thank the chair of governors, the school's local authority (LA) general inspector and the school council for the time they spent with me.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection in July 2006 the school was asked to improve all aspects of provision in the Foundation Stage. It was also asked to ensure that pupils are more aware of what they are aiming to achieve and how to improve their own work.

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

The school carried out an audit of provision in the Foundation Stage unit. Subsequently, staffing was increased and there are now two full-time teachers in the unit who are new to this key stage. A good level of training has been provided by the LA on key matters such as continuous provision and the role of the facilitator. Teachers have drawn appropriately on the strengths of experienced teaching assistants who have also participated in

training. This has helped to forge a good sense of teamwork and shared purpose amongst staff.

In the autumn term, the school focused on improving the unit's learning environment. It has been attractively and brightly redecorated and its layout reorganised. Separate activity areas, such as those for writing and mathematical development, are clearly designated with child-friendly signs. A role-play area is usefully matched to topics pupils are studying. Colourful wall displays are purposefully linked to number and literacy work. Existing resources have been rationalised and new ones purchased. These are generally well labelled. Consequently, the indoor environment is much more conducive to learning. The outdoor area has been enlarged and a new fence erected. However, due to safety concerns about the fence, pupils have recently been unable to access this area. This has limited the development of outdoor provision for pupils. The school is addressing this issue.

In each major working area in the unit early learning goals are clearly displayed for staff. These also indicate some vocabulary that can be promoted with pupils, although there is scope to develop this further. Learning prompts, such as the 'can you' cards, are prominently displayed in each area. These indicate two different levels of challenge, for Nursery and Reception pupils. These prompts could usefully be extended to ensure that the most able pupils are fully stretched. A new assessment system has been introduced to provide additional information about the abilities and progress of Reception pupils. The progress of pupils is assessed through frequent observation as well as through more formal targeted work. This information is used to update regularly the Foundation Stage profile. Pupils' progress is tracked and this data is appropriately used to group pupils by ability for literacy and numeracy activities. It is also used to identify pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Following training by the LA's consultants, a new planning format has been introduced. However, this is in the very early stages of implementation and it is too soon to assess its impact on raising standards.

Time is generally well used. There is an appropriate balance between teacher-directed and child-initiated activities. Pupils are challenged in formal sessions. For example, Reception pupils were given a suitable homework task based on the book they were reading together in a literacy lesson. These lessons, which are supported by good questioning, are preparing pupils well for the more formal work they will undertake in future key stages.

The school has made satisfactory progress in ensuring that pupils are more aware of what they are being asked to achieve in lessons. Learners are routinely informed of learning objectives, although there is some variation in the strategies used by different teachers to achieve this. Learning objectives are displayed on most classroom walls and on the desks of some pupils. Objectives are recorded by pupils in their books. Some are usefully given

weekly objectives in order to speed up pupils' progress. In some classrooms, helpful 'nag targets' are displayed, in order to reduce frequent errors, such as punctuation mistakes. Pupils reported that, overall, they are now much more aware of what it is that they have to do. Training sessions have been held to raise teachers' awareness of assessment methods. A number of different strategies are used to enable pupils to evaluate their own work and progress. Some work is marked by pupils under the guidance of the teacher, enabling learners to see where they have made mistakes. Marking is supportive and is beginning to reflect how well pupils have succeeded in meeting their learning objectives. Some marking indicates the next steps pupils should take in their learning. The school is aware that it now needs to review its policies for marking and assessment in order to ensure a greater consistency of approach throughout the school.

The LA has provided good support to the school, including extensive training in both the areas identified for improvement. The LA is funding the school's participation in a national programme that is designed to raise standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael McIlroy

Her Majesty's Inspector