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Dear Mrs Pillinger

OFSTED MONITORING OF SCHOOLS WITH NOTICE TO IMPROVE

Thank you for the help which you gave me when I inspected your school on 30 January 2007. Please pass on my thanks to your staff and pupils and, in particular, to the people with whom I had meetings: the members of the present and former school council; the coordinator for special educational needs; the school liaison officer for traveller culture; three parents; and two representatives each from the governors and the local authority.

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 on 8 June 2006, the school was asked to: match teaching to pupils' differing needs; improve the guidance to pupils so that they are clear about what they need to do to make progress with their school work; and, increase the involvement of teachers in leading and managing the school and make sure that they are accountable for pupils' standards and progress.

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

The strengths noted in the June report have been sustained. Personal development is good and the strong relationships lead to positive attitudes to learning. As one pupil succinctly put it, 'Everyone seems to bond.'

The pupils at your school come from a wide area. Nine are from the village whilst the remainder of the 60 on roll come, by parental choice, from further afield. The school has a long standing association with a group of travelling

families who have now settled nearby and continue to send their children to the school, as they have done for generations.

The parents who I met expressed strong support for the school. They told me that the critical report had not dented parental confidence. No pupils have been taken away as a result of it and I understand that you are expecting next year's intake to be over subscribed. The composition of the school is unusual in having above average proportions of both higher and lower attaining pupils with a relative scarcity of average pupils. Combined with small numbers in each year group, this results in particularly wide variations in attainment from year to year. At present, the proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities is a little below average, although last year it was more than twice as high and well above the national figure.

There has been a high turnover of staff and of headteachers in recent years but the situation has now stabilised, although there will be a new teacher starting in February for Class 1 (Reception and Year 1).

There has been good progress in matching teaching to pupils' differing needs that is particularly evident in Class 2 (Years 2, 3 and 4) and Class 3 (Years 5 and 6). The teachers make sure that older and higher attaining pupils are given work that is challenging. There is also good support for lower attaining pupils, with valuable help from classroom assistants in Class 2 where both the attainment and age range are particularly wide. In Class 2 and Class 3 the grouping is by attainment and not by year group and this is appropriate and helpful. In Class 1 the grouping is often by year group and some pupils are given tasks that are too easy or too difficult.

There has also been good progress in improving the guidance given to pupils, who know their group targets and what they need to do to attain them. The marking is encouraging and constructive, helping pupils to take the next steps in their learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities have individual education plans with specific and attainable targets that are regularly reviewed. In Class 3, pupils are setting their own personal targets, as well as aiming for their group targets, which are displayed on the classroom walls in a very helpful way. It would be a natural extension of the good work that has already been done to place both sets of targets in each pupil's books, to inform parents, and to involve pupils still further in tracking and recording their own progress.

Teachers in Class 2 and Class 3 are clearly accountable for their pupils' attainment and progress. It will be important to make sure that the new teacher in Class 1 shares this accountability. Links with other small schools nearby are being well used to develop the roles of the subject leaders.

The local authority has given valuable advice and support that has helped the school to make good progress. The support for the early years has been

particularly useful and I am pleased to hear that it will continue to be given to the new teacher over the next three terms.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Schenk
Her Majesty's Inspector