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Mr R W Pugh
The Headteacher
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Dear Mr Pugh

OFSTED MONITORING OF GRADE 3 SCHOOLS

Thank you for the help which you, your deputy 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.

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 17 and 18 January 2006, the school was asked to:

- improve pupils' achievements by ensuring that teaching is of a consistently high standard and the curriculum gives sufficient attention to improving the achievements of all pupils in basic skills
- improve the leadership and management of the school by ensuring that there is greater consistency of good practice throughout the school and the money allocated to the school is managed effectively
- develop a clear policy and rationale for the post-16 unit in order that the staff, governors and parents fully understand what it is seeking to achieve for its students
- ensure that the boarding provision puts a greater emphasis on how it can contribute to the educational benefits of pupils being in residence.

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

A new deputy headteacher has been appointed and a newly formed leadership team has been in place since September 2006. They provide good support to the headteacher and together give the school the necessary

strategic direction. They know the school's strengths and areas for development and these are reflected in the accurate and effective school improvement plan. This plan identifies the actions which need to be taken to move the school forward and how these will be monitored and evaluated, and are linked to the Every Child Matters agenda. There is clear evidence from the annotations that this is a working document and enables school leaders and managers, including governors, to hold themselves and the staff to account. The leadership team acknowledge that they are now familiar with working together and need to clarify their roles and individual areas of responsibility.

The school has worked closely with the local authority and an independent consultant to develop the accuracy, consistency and quality of feedback when carrying out lesson observations. This shows that the majority of teaching is now at least good. Where teaching is satisfactory areas for development are identified and communicated to staff, and support is given to bring about improvement. In some instances this is centred on developing inexperience or supporting specific areas of practice such as lesson planning. The performance management of teaching assistants requires further development. The school rightly wishes to do more to recognise and promote their professionalism through improved training and formal feedback.

The school now has in place a comprehensive system for recording and monitoring the progress of pupils, including those in the post-16 provision. This shows that all pupils make at least satisfactory progress with some that make good or even outstanding progress. The system allows teachers to turn data into targets for individual pupils and accurately calculate the rate of progress that they are making. The system is effective and is gradually becoming embedded into practice in teachers' lesson planning.

There is a clear policy and rationale for the post-16 unit. The teaching of this group is shared between a very experienced practitioner and the deputy head. The curriculum has been improved to make it less classroom based and more appropriate to preparing these young people for adult life. All students participate in work experience each week and some are enrolled on part time courses at colleges of further education. The method of accreditation has changed to one which is more appropriate and provides continuity with the work in Key Stage 4. The curriculum throughout the school is now more appropriately focused on the teaching of basic skills.

The process of communication between care and education staff, especially at points of changeover, has been strengthened. In the mornings care staff bring pupils to school and stay with them for a short period of time and at the end of the afternoon this process is reversed with teachers visiting the residential accommodation. The deputy headteacher and acting head of care meet weekly and are pursuing areas for development which can be supported by both elements of the school's provision, one example of which is the

programme for sex and relationships education. Some staff training is now undertaken by care and education professionals jointly. There is recognition that there is further work to be undertaken in strengthening the communication across the provision. It is intended that the induction of new staff will include them spending some time in both the school and boarding provision to widen their understanding.

The financial management of the school is sound and the deficit budget from 2004/05 has been reduced. It is predicted that there will be an underspend of approximately £24,000 in 2006/07. This has been achieved with support and guidance from the local authority and effective budget management.

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

Yours sincerely

Pauline Robins
Her Majesty's Inspector