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The Headteacher  
Barnwell School  
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Stevenage  
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Dear Mr Westergreen-Thorne

### OFSTED MONITORING OF GRADE 3 SCHOOLS

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 11 January 2007, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the significant range of information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, in particular those who gave up part of their lunch hour to meet the inspection team.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

As a result of the inspection on 2 November 2005, the school was asked to improve the quality of teaching and learning to match the best practice available and to enhance the range of vocational opportunities provided. In January 2006, the school was asked by the local authority (LA) to assume responsibility for the education of over 600 pupils who attended the nearby Collenswood School, due to close after a protracted period in special measures. The governors decided to seek the improvements they had been charged with by the inspection of November 2005, for all pupils on both sites.

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 closure of Collenswood and the expansion of Barnwell School have gone well despite the need to maintain provision for 500+ pupils on a distant site. The quality of provision for, and the standards achieved by the pupils of the former Collenswood School has improved significantly.

The inspection of Barnwell School in 2005 noted that standards remained below the national average but were on an improving trend; this pattern continued in 2006. At Key Stage 3, results were on average 10% stronger

than the previous year. Modest improvements were again recorded at GCSE and pupil progress improved. Results from the school's specialist subject areas were very close to the national average in business studies; information and communication technology (ICT), Mathematics was noticeably less successful. As a result the proportion of pupils attaining five higher level GCSEs that included English and mathematics was well below average. The last academic results published by the former Collenswood School were very low at Key Stage 3 and GCSE.

Achievement is improving on both sites as a result of effective teaching. The school's robust data analysis system indicates that all pupils are making appropriate progress. Challenging targets have been set for pupils on both sites. The efficiency of the merger arrangements to date, will allow the school to re-evaluate the time scales proposed for achieving the improvements in standards sought.

Pupils on both sites enjoy their educational opportunities. This is evident from their good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning in almost all lessons. Effective strategies are improving attendance on both sites. Consistently applied behaviour management strategies are effective and appreciated by pupils and their parents; exclusion rates have declined significantly.

All pupils based on the former Collenswood site are very positive with regard to the improvements in their education. However, they note that many after-school activities are held on the Barnwell West site. Some pupils commented that the lack of return transport to the Barnwell East site, restricts access to such facilities.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given very effective support. Every effort is made to ensure that support is inclusive. Pupils exhibiting behavioural difficulties are supported individually and re-integrated through the exemplary practice.

Year 7 pupils are accommodated on the Barnwell West site; however, years 8 -11 are taught on both sites. The replication of pastoral structures has been well managed; however, maintaining the structure on two sites places constraints on the pupils' personal development.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Senior staff were invited to join lesson observations with HMI. The outcomes of this exercise confirm the rigorous nature of the school's procedures and concur with the findings of the autumn term LA review.

The inspection of November 2005 required the school to enhance the range of vocational opportunities. Effective cooperation with the local college has allowed significant additions to the vocational provision. These have included,

pilot level 2 courses in construction, health and social care, and GCSE applied science that fit well with the school's specialist business and enterprise specialist status.

Leadership and management are good. Senior staff have done very well to manage a complex school merger and address the enhancement of provision required by the inspection report of November 2005 on both sites. Members of the senior and middle management teams have succeeded in developing the quality of learning effectively at both locations. However, it is particularly important that the improvements secured to teaching and learning continue to impact on pupil achievement and standards.

The governing body needs to seek the continued support of the LA for the integration of facilities. The current arrangements of parallel provision in years 8-11 are becoming increasingly costly in terms of staffing and place obstacles in the pursuit of improved standards.

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

Yours sincerely

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector