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Ms Sally Crowley
The Headteacher
Ravenor Primary School
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Dear Ms Crowley

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 26 June 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please could you pass on my thanks to the staff and pupils who spoke 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 December 2006, the school was asked to make improvements on four issues: several important aspects of leadership and management, especially in establishing robust procedures to monitor and evaluate teachers' and pupils' performance; standards in writing and mathematics; the quality of teaching ensuring that all staff plan more effectively and provide more challenging and interesting tasks for pupils; use of assessment to identify where pupils need to improve and provide better guidance on how they might be more successful.

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.

Leadership has been improved through the clarifying of roles, training and the greater involvement of all. However, systems and expertise are at early stages for delivering rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teachers' and pupils' performance. Staff are clearer about their roles and responsibilities and what needs to be done to raise standards. Within more effectively distributed leadership, they are working together in teams that are targeted well on the key areas for development, and each subject leader has drawn up an action plan linked effectively to raising standards. The senior management team is collaborating more constructively and openly. A new energy has been unleashed, and confidence and capacity have increased. Nevertheless, staff recognise that their expertise in monitoring and self-evaluation

needs further development to carry out their roles rigorously. For example, lesson observations are not focused sharply enough on pupils' progress.

Governance has been strengthened by the recent addition of experienced governors, some training, involvement with managing performance, and initial links with subject leaders. Governors are more informed about the school, which is an essential pre-requisite for providing greater challenge. However, challenge given is mainly regarding resources, and governors are not evaluating sharply enough the school's or their own progress on the issues raised in the last inspection.

There are now clearer guidelines to support improved teaching. Staff have worked well together to produce a sound teaching and learning policy accompanied by planning guidance. These are successfully placing an increased emphasis on providing a range of different work in lessons but they do not emphasise strongly enough building on assessment to challenge each pupil. Teaching has improved. It meets the range of pupils' needs better and it involves them more frequently in pair discussions that improve their ability to explain and enhance their understanding. It uses time more efficiently and interests pupils more.

Use of assessment has also improved. Assessment against National Curriculum levels is now more frequent and is displayed better in records so that it gives a clearer indication of attainment in relation to national expectations. This has increased the emphasis on raising attainment that is at risk of falling below these expectations. However, it has not highlighted pupils' progress well enough, particularly that of the higher attainers, a group for whom lack of challenge was identified in the last inspection. Pupils say that they are receiving better guidance on how to improve if they have difficulties, particularly in spelling. A new marking policy provides a sound step towards enhancing marking quality, but it is too soon for any monitoring of its impact on pupils' progress to have taken place. Pupils now have targets in numeracy and literacy, but not in science. Some are assessing their own attainment of the objectives in a lesson but few are given opportunities to link this to their individual targets and thus build up an overview of their progress and next steps.

There are indications that the greater focus on assessment and challenge is leading to improved teaching and to pupils consequently making better progress in lessons, but it is too early for sustained impact to be seen. Standards at Key Stage 2 remain below average but school data suggest they have improved for higher attainers.

The impact of support from the local authority since the last inspection is satisfactory. Support from the local authority was too slow in the first term after the last inspection. The local authority's contingency measures did not adequately compensate for its staffing difficulties in providing support. However, it did target its human resources expertise well to appoint a leadership consultant for the summer term and a permanent headteacher from September 2007. Also, appropriate numeracy and literacy support for Year 6 pupils was provided. This term, the leadership consultant has given very good support that has not only enabled the school to move forward rapidly but has also raised the staff's confidence and

capacity to sustain improvement in future. The local authority has not expressed clearly how it would support governance. Neither has it been sufficiently evaluative of the school's improvement or of the impact of its support.

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

Yours sincerely

Gill Close
Her Majesty's Inspector