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Mrs Christine Jefferys
The Headteacher
Welling School
Elsa Road
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Dear Mrs Jefferys

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 telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass my thanks also to the pupils who gave their time during break to talk to 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:

- raise standards in core subjects, particularly in Years 7 to 9
- improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning so that students make faster progress particularly during Years 7 to 9
- implement and evaluate more urgently actions to secure improvements in academic performance and attendance.

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 and in raising the students' achievements.

National test results for 2007 have not yet been received. The school's tracking data however indicate that there is likely to be significant improvement on previous years. This is because Year 9 students were prepared much better for the tests than in previous years. The school redeployed teachers to ensure that they were taught by highly effective practitioners. In advance of the tests there was a lot of emphasis on practice papers and the mock tests were taken seriously by staff and students. The school's new tracking systems enabled senior and middle leaders to identify those students who were at risk of underperforming. These individuals were then given intensive support and retested. This demonstrated significant improvement. Intervention strategies included booster classes and an Easter revision school. Finally the school managed the week of tests effectively ensuring that Year 9 had opportunities for revision alongside plenty of breaks.

The school has taken steps to improve the quality of teaching. A programme of staff development has been put in place covering the features of good teaching and learning. Senior managers now assess the quality of teaching more rigorously and inadequate teaching has been identified. As a result the school has been able to put in place coaching and support to bring about improvement. However, there remains too much satisfactory teaching and too little that is good or better. This is because teachers are not clearly focussed on learning objectives or telling students how to improve. In Year 7, however, the 'Opening Minds' programme for students with literacy needs exemplifies good practice and is raising the achievement of these students well.

Across Key Stage 3, work is not marked regularly enough, nor is helpful feedback given. As a result, although students now know and often understand their current levels, they do not understand what they need to do to improve. Individual teachers undertake personal initiatives on assessment but the school's assessment policy is not implemented consistently.

Middle leaders are increasingly aware of their responsibility for the quality of provision and the standards achieved by students in their area but a culture of accountability is still being developed. Senior leaders, for example, do not yet systematically discuss with them their strategies for raising standards and middle leaders do not all routinely evaluate their provision.

The school has worked hard to improve attendance and as a result there has been some marginal improvement. The school has further developed its reward system for good attendance and is developing good systems to chase up those who are absent.

The local authority has been effectively supporting the school's improvement and monitoring its progress through regular and close weekly contact. A major review of the school's provision has been carried out reporting significant improvements and identifying priorities for improvement. The school has responded to this by creating a robust plan of action which clearly indicates how these improvements will be achieved. The progress they make against these is carefully monitored and evaluated and appropriate adjustments made. In keeping with the action plan the LA has further supported the school through a programme of visits by its consultants who have sought to help the school improve teaching with some success.

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

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector