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Mrs W Harris
The Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Harris

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 11 December 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 21 June 2006, the school was asked to:

- focus on improving achievement in Years 1 and 2 so that standards can be closer to the national average by making better use of information gained from assessment to set challenging targets
- raise the standards achieved by more able pupils throughout the school by increasing expectations and providing more challenging work
- continue to make the best of the existing accommodation while making every effort to bring forward the promised rebuild so that pupils can enjoy all the learning opportunities to which they are entitled.

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 pupils' achievements.

Achievement in Years 1 and 2 has improved since the time of the last inspection. Test results in Key Stage 1 have risen markedly since 2005, when they had been well below average for three years. The 2007 results rose to above average levels and this represents satisfactory progress, given these pupils' above average starting points upon entering Year 1. The more able pupils did well. Current standards in Year 2 are in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are making good progress from their below average starting points. These improvements have been brought about because the teachers are now more closely

aware of the learning pathways each child needs to take in their first years of schooling. More accurate assessments are being made of children's levels of attainment upon entry to school. This has enabled the teachers to identify each child's learning strengths and weaknesses much earlier, set challenging targets for them, share these with parents, and provide the specific tuition the pupils need to help them make more rapid progress and reach age expected levels by the end of Year 2. Within a calm learning environment, children in the youngest class receive effective close support from the teacher and teaching assistants and sufficient opportunities to engage in self initiated learning.

Results in the national tests for Year 6 were disappointing in 2007 and standards dropped to below average levels. Too few able pupils reached the higher levels. However, this was a small class that included pupils who had specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities and who had joined the school late on in their time in Key Stage 2. Although pupils in Years 3 to 6 made satisfactory overall progress in English and mathematics last year, there were pockets of underachievement, especially in writing and mathematics. Since then, systems for assessing pupils and tracking their progress have been sharpened. The headteacher holds the staff closely to account for the progress all pupils make. Assessments are carried out regularly and accurately, enabling teachers to identify pupils who were previously underachieving. Lessons are now carefully planned to ensure that each ability group has work and support to match their needs within mixed age classes.

The evidence from this inspection visit shows that able pupils are now making satisfactory progress. Across the school, teachers know who the potential higher attainers are, group them carefully, and set them more advanced work. More able pupils report feeling positive about their own learning and can demonstrate how they have moved forward in their understanding. For example, more able pupils in Year 4 talked knowledgeably about the features of effective newspaper reports. In Year 6, the proportion of pupils working at the higher levels has increased this year. However, in each class, opportunities are missed to increase expectations still further. Insufficient attention was given to how more able pupils in Year 1 might apply their phonics skills to words they did not already know from memory or how more able writers in Years 2 to 4 might plan how to structure and develop their reports in imaginative and interesting ways. The older more able pupils reported that opportunities to use computers to extend and apply their learning in numeracy are limited. In each class, learning targets are clearly set and known to pupils, but are not reviewed with sufficient frequency to help move pupils on in their independent learning quickly.

The school has worked systematically to improve the curriculum despite the continued challenges posed by the school accommodation. Some, but not all, of the restrictions placed upon curriculum by the site have been addressed. The headteacher and new staff team have improved the quality of the internal environment. The school has created a dedicated computer suite and put interactive whiteboards in each classroom. Teachers have assessed the pupils' progress carefully and use this information to plan and deliver weekly computer skills lessons. The school is aware that further opportunities need to be developed for pupils to regularly apply these skills to their learning across the curriculum. There remains

insufficient space for indoor physical education, although pupils have enjoyed a gymnastics and dance programme taught off site at the local community college. This enabled teachers to set appropriately challenging skills development work for them. There is still no dedicated outdoor play area providing the necessary space, storage and shelter for Reception children to use and this restricts opportunities for exploratory and creative play. However, large scale apparatus, such as bicycles and scooters, is now available for children to practise and refine their gross motor skills and the school has introduced the 'Leap for Life' healthy living activities programme into the schedule for these younger learners.

The pace of improvement in the school has quickened in recent months. For example, the school's involvement as part of a local network of schools has enabled teachers to improve the curriculum further. The curriculum is being enriched by experts, such as visiting artists, and by a well attended set of extra curricular activities. The success of the sports and music clubs have, in turn, led to the school's active participation in local festivals such as the Devon Big Mix music event and national sports competitions, which saw the rugby team make an appearance at Twickenham! The local authority has provided effective challenge and support to the headteacher in her work to improve assessment systems and update the school's self-evaluation form (SEF). The school is aware that its forthcoming revision of curricular planning and target setting will enable teachers to incorporate the guidance for the revised Primary National Framework and raise expectations of what pupils can achieve still further.

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

Yours sincerely

David Townsend
Her Majesty's Inspector