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Ms J Jones
The Headteacher
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Dear Ms Jones

Ofsted Monitoring of Grade 3 Schools

Thank you for the help that you gave me when I inspected your school on 5 July 2007, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I am particularly grateful to the chair of governors and local authority adviser for the discussions I had with them. Please pass on my thanks to them and to the rest of the staff and pupils.

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 4 July 2006 the school was asked to address three areas for improvement.

- Improve pupils' rate of progress by ensuring that teaching is closely matched to their differing needs.
- Provide pupils with clear guidance about what they are doing well and what they need to do next to make more progress.
- Ensure that the impact of teaching and the curriculum on pupils' learning is rigorously checked so that weaknesses are identified and rectified.

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 and in raising the pupils' achievements.

The inspection in July 2006 came at the end of a turbulent time for the school. The local authority had been concerned about the capacity of the school to make progress and a review in October 2004 revealed some important weaknesses. The then headteacher was absent through illness from February 2005 and subsequently

retired. Over the next year, for a variety of reasons, there were three different acting headteachers leading the school. Understandably, these events caused anxiety for staff and parents. With your appointment as the substantive headteacher in September 2006 and the subsequent stability, the school has been able to work on the areas for improvement highlighted in the inspection in a coherent and structured way. In a relatively short time and building on previous knowledge of the school, you have built up a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. You have a clear vision for the future direction for the school and give effective leadership to staff. Improvements have been tackled with determination and enthusiasm.

Staff have worked on the improvement of teaching and learning in a systematic way over the last year. A coherent system to monitor teaching and learning across the school has been developed involving senior managers, subject leaders, and governors. A focus of monitoring has been the use of differentiation in teaching to meet the learning needs of pupils. This has been successful in developing a culture of professional dialogue with a focus on improvement. In total there have been six rounds of teaching or subject review throughout the year based on the objectives of the school improvement plan. In teaching, the fruits of this work can be seen in the effective engagement of pupils with good questioning to involve pupils of all abilities. Good subject knowledge and effective use of information and communication technology are helping to develop lively and interesting activities which engage pupils' imagination. There are good examples of well structured activities focused to challenge pupils of varying abilities. Progress tracking systems indicate that achievement is improving. The 2007 Year 6 statutory assessment tests in science received by the school before the monitoring inspection show an improvement in attainment over the previous year, particularly at the higher level. However, some planning does not make clear the activities to be developed for a particular ability group and this can lead to a lack of challenge, particularly for the higher ability pupils. Also, some worksheets lack the writing prompts that would help the less able to concentrate on the learning task rather than recording.

Part of the monitoring and review structure involves scrutiny of work, which has as one strand the quality of guidance for pupils. Subject leaders have a leading role in this process. In lessons teachers provide good oral feedback to groups and individuals on how to improve their understanding. In marking their work the guidance for pupils about what they are doing well is generally good. However, it is variable in noting clearly what they need to do to make further progress. There are some excellent examples of marking which provide clear guidance to pupils on how to improve and challenge them to develop their thinking in a particular subject. However, this is not consistent across classes. There are fewer examples of clear guidance in the marking of mathematics work than in other subjects.

Since September 2006 there has been a clear priority to develop a robust monitoring system which links school improvement to the development of teaching and learning. All teaching staff have been involved in this process with newly qualified teachers involved in a shadowing capacity as part of their professional development.

Governors have also been appropriately involved and, as a result, have improved their knowledge of the work of the school. Given the success of the process so far, it is important now to thoroughly embed the system and make any adjustments necessary to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose.

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

Yours sincerely

Robert Pyner
Her Majesty's Inspector