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Mr R Lee
The Headteacher
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Turnhouse Road
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Dear Mr Lee

Ofsted Monitoring of Schools with Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you and your deputy gave when Usha Devi HMI and I inspected your school on 26 June 2007. I appreciated the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information you and your deputy provided before and during our visit. Please pass on our thanks to the pupils and staff and to your chair of governors for her time.

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 October 2006, the school was asked to:

- ensure middle management post holders contribute effectively to the school's development by defining their responsibilities more precisely and holding them accountable for managing improvements
- ensure that pupils make more progress across the school by raising the teachers' expectations and monitoring the quality of teaching and provision with greater rigour.

Having considered all the evidence presented by the school and local authority (LA), I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress overall in addressing the two issues for improvement.

Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced significant staffing turbulence. Two teachers have been absent since March 2007 and one left in April 2007. Despite this turbulence, the headteacher and deputy have remained focused on tackling the issues identified at the time of the previous inspection. The school has made good progress in ensuring that middle management post holders

contribute more effectively. All teachers and teaching assistants, including those with management responsibilities, have had their roles and responsibilities defined. As a result, all staff have a clear understanding of the part they play in school improvement. Subject coordinators have all produced accurate action plans which identify specific areas for development. The headteacher and his deputy have provided effective support to make sure the success criteria in the plans are linked to the progress pupils make.

Although subject leadership is still variable, there is now a whole school approach to leading, monitoring and evaluating subject areas. A new English coordinator has been appointed and plans to start in September 2007. All subject leaders have scrutinised workbooks to check the quality of marking and have provided useful guidance for staff. Some have monitored lessons, tracked pupils' rates of progress, and presented information to the governing body. Middle managers are developing a sound understanding of the standards reached and the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects. Following their training, governors are more aware of their responsibility to question and hold the school to account for the progress pupils make. As they become more knowledgeable, their confidence to ask more probing questions is increasing.

The school has rightly focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning and has made satisfactory progress in this area. The headteacher and his deputy have communicated high expectations to all staff regarding the quality of teaching and learning required. Tailor-made training, modelling, coaching and paired visits to effective schools, as well as support from external consultants, have developed staff awareness of good classroom practice. Additionally, the 'Judging it ourselves' sheet, created by the staff, provides unambiguous criteria for judging the quality of a lesson. The introduction of a cycle of rigorous monitoring and termly progress checks is leading to more effective intervention to identify those pupils who need more support. Written feedback provided after lesson observations is detailed and linked to clear targets for improvement. Clear criteria for successful lessons, together with regular one to one discussions, provide an effective means of holding staff to account for pupils' performance throughout the school.

The planning of learning activities to meet the needs of pupils has improved. All teachers identify the learning journey at the start of lesson. However, some of these learning objectives are a description of activities rather than a focus on what the pupils are expected to learn by the end of the lesson. Teaching assistants are generally deployed well but not all are involved in the planning of lessons and some are too passive during whole class teaching. Most planning has three distinct levels of differentiation but this is not always well matched to pupils' needs. This is because not all teachers have a secure grasp of the individual pupils' level of ability. There is still too much inadequate teaching across the school. Despite the effective modelling of good classroom practice by an advanced skills teacher, and co-coaching by the headteacher and his deputy, this has not resulted in sustained improvement in three year groups where the quality of learning and teaching is too variable.

Whilst the local authority acknowledges it should have acted more swiftly before the previous inspection, it has provided good, strong support since the school was given a Notice to Improve. This support has been particularly effective in helping the headteacher to manage a number of staffing issues. Consultants have provided effective training and in-class support. For some staff this has been developmental and it has improved the quality of teaching and learning. The first LA action plan was not good enough. It was revised in June 2007 and the new one is satisfactory.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Rockey
Her Majesty's Inspector