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Mr Michael Snelson
The Headteacher
Rectory Farm Primary School
Rectory Farm Road
Northampton
Northamptonshire
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Dear Mr Snelson

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 27 June 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also thank your deputy, chair of governors, school improvement partner, and particularly the pupils for their help.

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 8 and 9 November 2006, the school was asked to:

- increase rates of progress and improve standards, particularly between Years 3 and 6
- ensure that all teaching takes full account of assessment information and pupils' prior knowledge
- make certain that the drive from leadership fully ensures procedures for assessing and tracking progress are brought to full effectiveness as soon as possible.

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.

The best progress has been made in addressing the final issue. Leaders have put in place effective procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. Careful records are kept of this progress in both the long and short term and class teachers are now beginning to be involved in the process. In particular, they are now far more accountable for the progress that pupils in their classes are making. The records of progress have enabled the school to put in place a wide range of more carefully focused intervention strategies to ensure that pupils are making better progress.

Leaders are also beginning to monitor the effectiveness of these strategies to see what impact they are having on pupils' progress. This monitoring shows that they are having the desired result, for example, in improving standards in reading. The governing body has been strengthened and the new expertise has had a considerable effect on the levels of challenge and support offered to the headteacher. Governors are much better informed as they have put in place a thorough monitoring programme.

In Years 3 to 6, pupils' progress has improved and is broadly satisfactory. The standards pupils reach have improved from being exceptionally low at the time of the last inspection to below average currently. This is largely as a result of teachers using assessment information effectively to identify potential underachievement. Good strategies are then put in place to help them catch up. However, within the picture of satisfactory progress, there is some variation. For example, progress in reading and writing is much better than progress in mathematics. Although mathematics has been a focus for improvement in the school for two years, the past gaps in pupils' knowledge are still being filled. There is also some difference between the progress made by less able pupils and other pupils. The rate of progress of less able pupils is slower, even when taking into account their capabilities.

One of the major factors in pupils' improved progress is that the quality of teaching has improved satisfactorily. The local authority set suitably challenging targets for the improvement of teaching over time and these targets are being met. Teachers are now much more aware of pupils' next steps in learning. They discuss learning targets with individual pupils regularly, and their marking also refers to these targets and whether pupils are meeting them or not.

The local authority has provided good support for the school. The work of the school improvement partner and local authority advisers and consultants has had a positive impact, particularly on improving the quality of teaching. Pupils' progress has accelerated as a result.

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

Yours sincerely

John D Eadie
Additional Inspector