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Mrs P Jones  
Cottesbrooke Junior School  
Cedars Avenue  
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West Midlands  
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Dear Mrs Jones

### 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 18 September 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 28 and 29 November 2006 the school was asked to:

- raise the quality of teaching and learning, especially in mathematics, by ensuring that teachers set suitably challenging tasks for all groups of pupils and increase the amount learnt in lessons
- focus firmly on improving achievement by more rigorously analysing pupils' performance, particularly in science and for different groups of pupils.

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' achievement.

The school has implemented a suitable range of short and long term strategies to raise standards. Several initiatives were in place at the time of the last inspection, but the school has accelerated its efforts and has focused more sharply on raising attainment. Standards are rising. Unvalidated results in the most recent Key Stage 2 national tests in 2007 showed significant improvement. There were increases in the proportions of pupils that gained the expected Level 4 and higher Level 5 in English, mathematics and science. The greatest improvement was in mathematics, where the school had focused most support over the last year. However, the school's results were below its challenging targets and, more significantly, standards in writing declined. The school recognises that the legacy of weak provision remains a barrier to good achievement, particularly in writing where the standard of many pupils' work is below age related expectations.

Procedures for assessing and tracking the pupils' progress are more systematic and robust. The school's data indicate that pupils now make better progress in lessons and over time and that more are on track to reach their end of year targets. Assessment information is effectively analysed and evaluated so that work is more carefully targeted and areas of weakness are identified and addressed. The Easter revision school was a successful new initiative. Data is used more systematically, but target setting, although developing well, is not specific enough to guide what individual pupils need to do to improve.

The overall quality of teaching has strengthened considerably, particularly the proportion of good or better lessons. The systematic monitoring of teaching is effectively used to share best practice and to strengthen weaker provision. The school recognises that some weaknesses remain and has implemented appropriate programmes of individual support. Improved team working amongst staff, with the implementation of common procedures and practices, is having a positive effect on the quality of teaching and on pupils' rates of progress. The quality of short term planning has improved. Lessons are more sharply focused on specific learning objectives and outcomes, and pupils are given a better range of activities that engage them more actively in their learning. The best lessons observed during the visit were lively and demanding in terms of pace and the level of challenge for pupils with different abilities. When tasks were interesting and skilfully directed, the pupils really enjoyed their work. Their attitudes to learning were very good; they sustained their concentration well and collaborated well in pairs and small groups. Teachers have a clearer understanding of the criteria against which pupils' progress needs to be assessed, and marking is consequently more purposeful and specific in guiding improvement. The pupils take greater responsibility for their learning, for example in evaluating their own work and that of their peers.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide effective leadership and have guided well the school's improvement. Leadership has been strengthened by the restructuring of roles and by developing the monitoring and evaluation responsibilities of phase and subject leaders. Strategies for raising standards have been addressed on a wide front, including successful steps to involve parents more closely.

Since the last inspection, the local authority has responded positively to the school's needs with a suitable programme of support. This guidance has been welcomed by the school.

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

Yours sincerely,

Paul Brooker  
Her Majesty's Inspector