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Mr Ron Searle
The Headteacher
The Warwick School
Noke Drive
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Dear Mr Searle

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 16 October 2007, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the extensive information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to the chairman of governors and the pupils, particularly those who came for an interview. The school has specialist status in mathematics, science and technology and became a vocational lead school in 2006.

As a result of the inspection in February 2007, the school was asked to:

- Ensure that routines for classroom management and movement around the school are consistently applied so that all students have a good learning environment.
- Raise levels of attendance and improve punctuality.
- Raise standards, particularly in English, and levels of achievement for all students by ensuring greater consistency in the quality of teaching.
- Ensure that the strategies and policies, which are clearly set out by the headteacher, are effectively implemented and monitored by managers at all levels.

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.

Standards in the school improved markedly in 2007 and are now near the national average at GCSE, but remain below average at Key Stage 3. Data, which has yet to be fully validated, indicates that 56% of pupils attained at least five higher grades at GCSE, with 48% also attaining higher grades in English and mathematics; 91% of pupils attained at least five GCSE grades. The percentages attaining Level 5 or higher in Year 9 were 67%, 70% and 63% respectively in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' progress has improved since 2006, but is still below average. There

has been some underachievement in English and also in science; relatively few pupils attained the top grade of A*. The school has undertaken an analysis of results by gender, which indicates that the gap between boys and girls has been significantly reduced. The school did not meet its targets for 2007 but is hopeful of meeting most of its targets for 2008.

The quality of those lessons seen was satisfactory overall, with some very good features, but also instances of where a minority of pupils made limited progress. This is less positive than the school's internal assessment that over two thirds of lessons are good or better. Almost all lessons made good use of data projectors and were supported by careful lesson plans. Very good features included the clever use of graphics in a scientific presentation, supported by a display of relevant practical resources. In satisfactory lessons, progress was relatively modest. Occasionally, pupils took too long to settle but behaviour is being managed in a consistent way by teachers.

Routines for classroom management are becoming embedded so that lessons are orderly. Relationships are usually good and pupils work with application and concentration. This has had an effect on improving the learning environment, as attested by pupils. However, movement around the school is not always calm, especially just after breaks; on the day of the inspection, there was boisterous behaviour by a few pupils. The school's managers acknowledge that further improvements are needed.

There are a number of strategies in place to deal with behaviour, with a sliding scale of sanctions, from verbal warnings to exclusion. At present, the level of fixed-term exclusions is high and at a similar level to last year. However, the number of serious incidents has reduced. Further work is needed to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions over the year.

The attendance in 2006/07 was 90%, lower than the national average. Work has been undertaken to improve attendance and there are signs of some positive impact, though attendance in September this year was slightly lower at 93.2% than September 2006. In the lessons visited the attendance was 92.2%. Though boys' attendance has improved, attendance levels for girls fell; the attendance of Year 8 pupils also fell, though it improved in most other year groups. Unauthorised absences have reduced but are still relatively high. There have been some problems with the electronic system for recording attendance and punctuality which have yet to be fully resolved, as became apparent during this inspection. The inclusion and attainment team is monitoring the attendance of about 50 pupils who cause concern. A number of Key Stage 4 pupils are being taught a mixture of vocational courses and work-experience at a site a few miles away, which has had a marked effect on improving their attendance.

The headteacher and his senior management team continue to provide good leadership and patrol the school to improve behaviour during movement times. They have implemented a regular monitoring procedure for lessons to ensure that strategies such as 'assessment for learning' are being implemented effectively. The governors have now become more involved in monitoring. Pairs of governors are

linked to each member of the senior leadership team and provide written feedback to the chairman.

Previous difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff have eased and the turnover of staff in 2007 was much lower. Several teachers have been assessed as advanced skills teachers to provide further support. Changes have been made to the timetable to reduce movement time; pupils said that they preferred the longer one-hour lessons.

The local authority (LA) was slow to recognise the school's problems with behaviour and falling standards in 2005/06. Weaker aspects of the LA's statement of action to improve the school, such as including more measurable success criteria and more precise costs, have not been addressed. The school improvement partner for the school was not able to attend during this inspection. However, the LA has provided appropriate support for managing behaviour and monitoring attendance this year. A team of four local inspectors was commissioned to undertake an inspection of the school recently and produced a detailed and positive report on the progress made by the school, which is mostly in line with the findings from this visit.

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

Yours sincerely

R Kapadia
Her Majesty's Inspector