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Miss J Dower
Headteacher
Croftlands Junior School
Oakwood Drive
Ulverston
Cumbria
LA12 9JU

Dear Miss Dower

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 4 October 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I am also grateful to the governors and the local authority for assistance with this 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 in February 2007, the school was asked to:

- Improve standards and achievement, especially in mathematics and science, by improving teaching so it is consistently good across the school.
- Accelerate the rate of improvement in science.
- Ensure that the pupils withdrawn from class for extra support receive their full entitlement to the curriculum and that their learning in other subjects is not adversely affected.
- Extend the best practice of providing guidance for pupils so all have a clear idea of what they need to do to improve.

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.

The school has responded purposefully to the issues identified at the inspection in February. The headteacher is well supported by a committed team of staff and governors who share her vision and sense of direction. As a result, morale has improved, teamwork is strong and staff are increasingly receptive to new ideas. For example, senior staff have taken every opportunity to benefit from the effective

support of the local authority to push the school forwards. In doing so, efforts have been clearly focused on raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching.

The school is a harmonious community. Behaviour is good. Pupils try their best and they are keen to do well.

Pupils' work in lessons and in their books, together with the school's own assessment data, shows that their progress is accelerating. Unvalidated data in the national tests for 2007 indicates that increasing numbers of Year 6 pupils are reaching the expected levels and their achievement is improving, particularly in mathematics and science. In addition, the percentage of pupils achieving more highly than this at Level 5, is also increasing. This is because procedures for assessing the effectiveness of the school's performance and for setting challenging targets for pupils are more effective and are leading to improvements in classroom practice. Senior teachers are acting more decisively in their analysis of data. Additional support to pupils is carefully planned. Effective tracking systems have been introduced to identify pupils who are underachieving. There are clear expectations of the progress pupils should make each year. As a result, the school is better placed to judge how well the pupils are achieving, plan appropriate support and track their progress more effectively. Teachers are gaining confidence in judging the level of pupils' work and in their understanding of what pupils can do and what they need to learn next.

Increased opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge in lesson activities are leading to a faster rate of improvement in mathematics and science across the school.

There have been improvements in teaching, including how well lessons are planned and in the use of success criteria to improve pupils' understanding. The teaching is mainly good, with some that is satisfactory. No inadequate teaching was observed. In the best lessons, activities are well chosen and pupils are fully engaged. For example, pupils in a Year 5 lesson learned how to select the correct method in weighing and measuring by investigating, predicting and recording their own findings in carefully crafted practical activities. In these lessons the pace is brisk, expectations are high and pupils are engrossed in their work. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are skilled in developing pupils' thinking through effective questioning that keeps pupils on their toes. Teaching assistants provide good quality support, enabling all pupils to play a full part in lessons and activities. Effective teamwork ensures that work is well planned for those who need extra support, which ensures their good progress.

The pupils have good attitudes to learning: even when activities are less engaging, they work hard and behave well.

Where teaching is less strong, the range of teaching styles is limited, work is over-directed and pupils are not fully engaged in many of the activities. Too many worksheets are used, limiting the pupils' scope to record what they have learned. Some of the higher attaining pupils are not challenged enough. In these lessons, the pace of learning slows because the teaching is largely focused on the delivery of the lesson materials rather than on the quality of pupils' learning and interaction.

The marking of pupils' work is improving. There are good examples where pupils are given clear guidance of how to improve their work and how to reach the next level. However, the quality of marking is sometimes variable and is not consistent in some classes.

The school has ensured that the learning of pupils who are withdrawn from lessons for extra support is not put at risk or adversely affected. This is because senior teachers have undertaken a comprehensive review of policy and have introduced clear guidance and protocols for staff. All pupils are now taught within their own classrooms and occasions when they are withdrawn from lessons are kept to a minimum. For example, withdrawal is only considered when one-to-one work with individuals is required or where pupils are persistently disruptive. As a result, pupils are no longer disadvantaged by missing a class lesson and their entitlement in the subject that was being taught.

The school is well placed to improve further, with the continued support of the local authority. The whole-school commitment to improvement and the positive way the schools acts upon advice has strengthened its capacity to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood
Her Majesty's Inspector