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Mr W Zaman
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Zaman

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 29 November 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information you provided before and during my visit. I am also grateful to the chair of the governors and the local authority (LA) 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 on 18–19 April 2007 the school was asked to:

- improve pupils' achievement, particularly in Years 3 to 6
- ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good and that pupils are always provided with suitably challenging and engaging work
- improve the use of assessment information to plan lessons and to encourage pupils to reach higher standards.

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 with urgency to the issues identified at its inspection. The headteacher, supported well by senior staff and the LA, has shown great determination in ensuring that efforts have been clearly focused on raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching. Since his appointment he has provided strong and decisive leadership and has gained the support and confidence of staff and governors. In doing so, he has accelerated the pace of change, redeployed staff and taken significant steps to prioritise actions and eliminate inadequate teaching. Expectations have been raised, morale is improving and team

work is strong. As a result, the legacy of underachievement is being tackled more effectively and senior leaders have a clearer focus of how well the school is performing.

Pupils' work in lessons and in their books, as well as the test results from 2007, indicate that increasing numbers of pupils are making better progress than previously and that standards are beginning to rise. This is also evident from the school's records which track pupils' achievement. For the first time in seven years, the results of national tests are above the school's floor targets in all core subjects at age 11. A notable success was that in mathematics 79% of pupils attained Level 4, the standard expected for their age, which was above the national average. This is because the school has successfully introduced several strategies to raise pupils' achievement, that in turn are leading to improvements in classroom practice. The planning of lessons is more focused on what pupils will learn. There are clearer expectations of the progress pupils should make each year. Staff are being held to account for performance and are acting more decisively on their analysis of data. Improvements to tracking systems are enabling staff to identify pupils who are underachieving and those who are capable of working at a higher level. Teachers are gaining confidence in judging the level of pupils' work. There are regular discussions of how well pupils are achieving and staff are provided with specific time for evaluating and reviewing assessment information. As a consequence, support and intervention is planned more appropriately, staff have a greater awareness of the needs of individual learners and are increasingly confident in judging what pupils need to learn next.

Nevertheless, while improving, standards for the higher-achieving pupils are not yet good enough. The level of challenge in some lessons is variable, which means that some pupils do not always achieve as well or as rapidly as they should.

The quality of teaching is improving. The lessons observed were at least satisfactory and some were good; none was inadequate. This is because of the strong support by senior leaders in coaching less confident and experienced colleagues and the fact that both the headteacher and deputy headteacher are able to lead by example in demonstrating good practice. In addition, procedures for checking on the quality of teaching are much sharper and are having a strong impact on improving learning. Lesson observations by senior staff routinely focus on the progress made by pupils in each class and teachers are provided with clear targets to improve their practice. Accompanying feedback is helping teachers to provide for pupils' needs much more effectively.

Where teaching is strongest, relationships are highly productive; pupils are enthusiastic and work hard. Expectations are high, the pace of learning is rapid and outcomes are clear. Teaching assistants provide good quality support. New learning consistently builds on pupils' prior knowledge.

Most teachers are demonstrating an improved understanding of pupils' progress and this is strengthening their ability to plan more relevant activities. Consequently, pupils gain enjoyment from their work and demonstrate positive attitudes to their studies. The use of success criteria is improving pupils' understanding. Teachers are

increasing their confidence in managing learning and are beginning to provide opportunities for pupils to work independently. In a Year 6 literacy lesson, for example, pupils were able to deepen their understanding of fact and opinion in journalistic writing by analysing different examples with a partner or in small discussion groups.

Where teaching is less strong, the range of teaching styles is limited, work is over-directed and pupils are not always engaged in some of the activities. Some of the higher-attaining pupils are not challenged enough. The questioning by teachers of these pupils could be more sharply focused. Pupils always try their best and are keen to succeed. They show positive attitudes to their work: even when lessons are less engaging, they persevere and behave well.

The school has made significant steps in improving teachers' use of information to plan and prepare lessons. The tracking of pupils' progress is far more effective. Teachers routinely use assessments to set and review targets for individual pupils to inform their learning. However, senior leaders are aware that in some lessons there is a variation in the level of challenge for the highest attainers and that some pupils are not consistently aware of their own targets. Systems for marking pupils' work are improving. There are some good examples where pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve their work. However, the quality of marking is variable and is not consistent in some classes.

The school is well placed to improve further, with the effective support of the LA. The whole-school commitment to improvement and the positive way the school 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