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18 December 2007

Ms S Denning  
The Headteacher  
The Forest School  
Comptons Lane  
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RH13 5NW

Dear Ms Denning

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 11 December 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Could you also please pass on my thanks to the pupils I spoke to as well as the staff who gave so freely of their time?

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 30 November and 1 December 2006, the school was asked to:

- improve the quality of teaching and the use of assessment to raise standards and pupils' progress
- implement an effective curriculum, which emphasises the school's specialist status and is matched to the learning needs of all pupils
- engage parents and carers in a more informed understanding of the school's work and encourage a more active involvement in their sons' learning and achievement.

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.

Since the inspection the senior leadership of the school has undergone significant change. The previous long-standing headteacher had left at the end of the term prior to the inspection, and the acting headteacher, in post at the time of the inspection, left at Easter. A new permanent headteacher is now in post and the structure of the senior team is undergoing revision.

My visits to a sample of lessons confirmed that the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and improving. This is most evident where the teachers have a good understanding of the need for pupils to be more actively involved in their learning. Some teaching is still over directed by the teacher with pupils being only passive learners. Pupils say they find this type of teaching particularly boring and uninteresting, although they acknowledge that the quality of their lessons has improved of late.

The use of assessment to inform and support learning has improved. Pupils are more familiar with their targets and know the level they are working at in many subjects. However, practice is not consistent and there is not enough sharing of strengths across all subject areas. Pupils are sometimes not given enough guidance on how to improve the quality of their work.

Recent improvements in teaching and assessment have not yet had an impact in terms of raising achievement. In 2007 the overall percentage of pupils gaining 5 A\* to C grades improved, but not enough pupils made the progress they should have from their already high starting points.

Pupils behave well in and around the school. They feel they are more trusted by their teachers and the school is making more effort to listen to their opinions and act on them. They believe that discipline has improved recently and acknowledge that this is a benefit of the new 'consequences' discipline policy. However, many feel strongly that these policies only work well when 'they are used properly' – that is, fairly and equally by all staff.

The quality of the curriculum is improving as the school implements the planned programme of curricular change. This is aimed at developing a curriculum that is more appropriate to individual needs and also reflects the school's specialist status in engineering and business and enterprise. Statutory requirements for citizenship are now met and linked to specialist status through new activities such as the accredited 'managing your personal finance' course currently being trialled with Years 7 and 10. Option choices offered to GCSE pupils have improved. Young Apprenticeships in Engineering and a wider range of courses in design and technology have been introduced. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has also improved with greater emphasis on skill development and the introduction of a vocational qualification for all at GCSE. There is limited evidence of wider use and impact of ICT in other subject areas, especially where teachers have limited ICT skills.

The school is making strenuous efforts to engage and inform parents and carers. For example, pupils' progress is analysed and reported more frequently, giving clearer feedback to all. Parents and carers are invited to become more involved in wider school issues through focus groups. These particularly encourage parents who have raised issues with the school to become involved, and have resulted in a significant drop in the number of parental complaints received by the headteacher. Communications with pupils have also improved through additional teacher/student focus groups. Pupils acknowledge that changes have been made as a result of these

activities, although they express some impatience at the speed with which changes they suggest are implemented.

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

Yours sincerely

Christine Jones  
Her Majesty's Inspector