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Mrs Lynne Pritchard
The Headteacher
Whitefriars First and Middle School
Whitefriars Avenue
Wealdstone
Harrow
HA3 5RQ

Dear Mrs Pritchard

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 6 February 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to the pupils, especially those from Year 6 that came to speak with me, the local authority's representative and the two governors who attended the feedback meeting.

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 November 2006, the school was asked to raise achievement and standards in mathematics and improve the achievement of higher attaining pupils through challenging activities. The report also highlighted the fact that the school did not meet government requirements for safeguarding learners.

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's procedures for safeguarding pupils meet government requirements.

Since the inspection, building work has been completed and the children's centre attached to the school is operational. Several staff have joined the school, including three who are new to teaching. The school continues to face the challenge of a high turnover of pupils, many of whom join the school speaking little English. Many pupils begin the Nursery with skills and experience below that typically found for their age. By Year 6, standards remain low in mathematics and science, but continue to rise gradually in English where the gap between the school's results and national figures is narrowing slowly. Results for 2008 are projected to rise in mathematics, although

not in English, but likely to remain well below national figures. However, the school's data for the current year show that most pupils are making expected progress in mathematics. In particular, recent assessments show that the school's focus on developing pupils' skills in mental maths, supported by input from the local authority, is paying dividends in all year groups.

The teaching seen during the visit was at least satisfactory, matching your evaluation of the quality of teaching. However, the focus on the language of mathematics is inconsistent. Done well in some classes, there is further scope to raise the profile of mathematics across other areas of the school with displays, aids to learning, and a strong focus on the mathematical vocabulary. From the start of the academic year, the school has set Key Stage 2 pupils into ability groups for mathematics in order to better meet their needs, and to provide challenge for higher attaining pupils. Although too early to identify the impact of this arrangement, the school will need to review the provision for pupils at the margins of the two sets in each year group to ensure parity.

Your recent attendance at training for making classroom observations has sharpened your approach to analysing teaching and its impact on pupils' learning. Plans to disseminate this training to senior managers to ensure a systematic and consistent approach to monitoring teaching and setting targets for teachers are appropriate. There is scope to increase the frequency of sampling pupils' work and to dovetail this method of monitoring with classroom observation and data analysis.

The school's system for tracking pupils' progress is developing satisfactorily and used increasingly to check the progress of individuals. A recent initiative is for senior managers to meet termly with each teacher to check the progress of each pupil. This is a potentially good strategy for identifying individuals who might be falling behind in order to take prompt action. It is also effective in holding staff accountable for the standards their pupils achieve. However, the data are not yet in a format that makes it easy to identify pupils' progress from year to year. There is scope, too, for senior managers to analyse the performance of year groups and different groups of pupils in a more systematic way to fine-tune the target setting process and to inform their judgements on overall quality of provision. The challenge for the school is to strike a balance between sustaining the broad curriculum and positive ethos that is reflected in pupils' good personal development and well-being, with the drive to raise standards in basic skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Wotherspoon
Her Majesty's Inspector