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Mrs A Charlton
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Charlton

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 29 April 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information you provided before and during my visit. I would also like to thank the governors for giving time to meet with me and the pupils for being so welcoming and for speaking with me so openly.

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 9 and 10 October 2007, the school was asked to:

- Raise pupils' standards and achievement by Year 2 and also raise standards in science by Year 6.
- Improve pupils' attendance and behaviour, in particular the behaviour of boys, in order to improve the overall quality of learning.
- Ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good across the school.
- Increase the level of parental involvement in their children's learning and in the life of the school.

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 pupils' achievement.

The headteacher, who has been in post since January 2008, has identified very rapidly and accurately the improvements needed. Her clear vision, coupled with thorough monitoring and evaluation, has provided greater clarity for staff and pupils of what is expected. She has acted quickly and with determination to take the necessary actions, but the short timescale means that the effects of this work are not yet evident in improved achievement and standards. The leadership team and the governors' understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses have improved

and so they are increasingly able to assist the headteacher in making the required changes. The local authority is monitoring the school's progress closely and is giving effective and focused support. This has helped the school to improve pupils' behaviour, assessment and the teaching of science.

The school's detailed assessment and tracking information indicates that pupils' progress is increasing in most classes at both key stages. However, while a good start has been made, this improvement is not consistent and expectations of some pupils remain too low. Overall, pupils are still working at below average levels and are underachieving. Weaknesses in writing, in particular, continue. Although pupils show a better understanding of writing for different purposes, many are unable to write at length and handwriting and presentation continue to be weak. Science has now been introduced as a separate subject in all classes, enabling better progress in this subject. Opportunities for investigation in science have increased, resulting in pupils gaining in knowledge, confidence and in the use of scientific vocabulary.

Pupils' behaviour is much improved since the October 2007 inspection and is now satisfactory. Movement around the school is orderly and lunchtimes and playtimes are calmer. Pupils recognise the benefits of the 'walking bus' in helping them to move sensibly between the dining room and the playground. Behaviour in lessons is much better. Routines for 'respectful listening' are well established in most classrooms. Pupils recognise this is helping them learn more effectively and say that because lessons are now more interesting, 'bad people are not stopping lessons'. Younger pupils, in particular, feel safer and say bullying is rarer, although it still occurs occasionally. Pupils' attendance has risen considerably, so that it is now in line with national averages and in some year groups, for example Year 6, it exceeds the national average.

Teaching is improving, with a greater proportion of good lessons. Pupils appreciate the increased opportunities to talk with a partner and to work in a group to discuss ideas or to carry out investigations. From the outset of lessons, pupils are clear about what they will be learning and this is reviewed at the end of the lesson. Behaviour is now managed well, allowing all pupils to concentrate and to make progress. Although pupils' work continues to be marked regularly, comments tend to be positive irrespective of the quality of the work, and pupils receive little advice about how to improve. This reinforces low expectations and thus restricts pupils' progress.

Work is continuing to improve parents' access to, and involvement with, the life of the school and there are some early signs that parental confidence in the school is growing. Opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's learning remain limited, although in some classes homework is starting to increase the links between home and school.

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

Yours sincerely
Liz Godman
Additional Inspector