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10 March 2008

Mr P Bruffell
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bruffell

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 March 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my 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 June 2007, the school was asked to improve: achievement and raise standards through the use of assessment to inform teachers' planning; teaching by raising teachers' expectations, placing more emphasis on basic skills in the Foundation Stage, and improving the quality and use of assessments in planning and teaching; and ensure that teachers with responsibilities develop the skills to be more effective and that governors hold the school to account.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the areas for improvement and in raising pupils' achievement.

An effective senior team leads the school. At the last inspection, the senior team was relatively new and beginning to establish its commitment to school improvement. Following the inspection, the senior team has strengthened its capacity further. Senior staff have been effective in prioritising and targeting actions and in establishing a new ethos and culture of achievement among staff, children and parents. Previously, systems for monitoring and holding the school to account were mostly not in place and they lacked rigour. The situation has now changed and as a result, staff are now focused on raising standards.

The school continues to face challenging circumstances linked to the increasingly high numbers of children who leave or join the school at different times, many of whom enter with little or no English. Additionally, a small minority do not attend

regularly. Since the last inspection, staff, including two newly qualified teachers, have joined the school but there are continuing difficulties with recruiting suitably qualified teachers for the Foundation Stage. Most children, including the majority of new entrants, begin the Nursery with literacy and numeracy skills and experience well below that typical for their age. Good progress has been made in the Foundation Stage in improving the quality of provision to accelerate children's progress. There is increased focus on improving basic literacy skills using various strategies such as Write Dance. Teachers now use baseline assessment to identify skills on entry and adapt their approach to targeting and supporting children. The learning environment now has a good range of stimulating resources. The recently appointed parent support adviser is playing a pivotal role in helping the school to tackle under-achievement by using a sound range of intervention strategies when working with parents.

By the end of Year 2, standards remain low in English and numeracy. The current challenging but realistic targets for 2008 show a projected improvement in reading, writing and numeracy. However, achievement is still likely to remain below the national and local authority's averages. Current assessment information for all year groups, including the Nursery classes year, show that most children are making steady progress with a minority making better progress from a low starting point.

Rapid progress has been made in developing procedures for assessing children's progress. Although the procedures are still being embedded, assessment information is now an essential part of school improvement and, therefore, teachers' planning. Teachers now analyse work and data, so that the achievement of different groups of children can be assessed accurately, and all can have equal opportunities to achieve to their potential. For example, weaknesses identified in literacy and numeracy have led to increased focus on developing children's skills to link sounds with letters and data handling. Work is now tailored better to the needs of individuals and groups. Teachers now have ownership of assessment information and this responsibility has increased accountability to senior managers who set targets linked to performance management. Consequently, expectations are higher and teachers and support staff now understand the rationale behind assessment and target setting.

The quality of teaching and learning has improved satisfactorily. Appropriate steps have been taken to increase staff awareness of the characteristics of good teaching. There is not yet enough good teaching to ensure that the legacy of underachievement is completely rectified. However, the previously wide variation in teaching is now not a feature of this rejuvenated school. Planning has improved and involves teamwork and sharing of good practice among all staff. Intensive support, monitoring, evaluation, a revised curriculum and commitment to continuous professional development have contributed to the recent improvements. Additionally, external and internal monitoring has made a difference to driving improvement.

Senior leaders have done much to improve the quality of management at all levels. Middle managers are now confident about the school's vision and can clearly articulate the work they need to do in the corporate endeavour to drive improvement. Subject coordinators now take responsibility for monitoring their area of work. Governors are now working satisfactorily. There is not yet a full complement

of governors but highly experienced governors have been recruited and are increasingly involved in the school's work. The school has benefited from a good range of support from the local authority, which has helped to increase its capacity to improve further.

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

Yours sincerely

C P Rodney

Carmen Rodney
Her Majesty's Inspector