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Mr John Trueman  
Headteacher  
Silver Tree Primary School  
Durham Road  
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Dear Mr Trueman

### Ofsted monitoring of Notice to Improve schools

Thank you for the help which you gave when I inspected your school on 26 June 2008. I appreciate the time you gave to our phone discussions and am grateful for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the governors, staff and pupils for their contributions.

Since the previous inspection there have been several staff changes. The current headteacher took up post at the beginning of this term and works with an associate headteacher, who has been in the school for the past two terms. Both Year 6 and Year 5 classes have had changes of staff.

As a result of the inspection in December 2007, the school was asked to: raise standards and improve achievement by Year 6; increase the challenge and pace in teaching and raise expectations of the pupils; improve provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and increase their rate of progress; and to improve attendance.

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.

Although the headteacher has only been in post since the beginning of this term, his effective leadership and management skills are ensuring that provision is improving. His partnership with the associate headteacher works very well. They provide a clear analysis of each pupil's progress based on the new efficient tracking systems, the more rigorous assessment, the detailed end of year testing and the increased monitoring of teaching and learning. As a result, the key area in Key Stage 2 where achievement was inadequate is improving. Although progress remains inconsistent between different year groups, scrutiny of pupils' work and observations of lessons show that in Years 5 and 6 pupils' progress is now good. The negative impact of previous weaknesses in provision means that standards by Year 6 remain below

average. Standards in mathematics were particularly low in the past and, although they have risen, they are still below average. Data show that standards in written mathematics are higher than in mental mathematics and standards in writing are lower than reading. Progress in Years 3 and 4 is satisfactory overall, with some inadequate progress of more able pupils.

Improving the quality of teaching and learning has been a key priority. This is having a positive impact, although the quality remains inconsistent. Teaching is good in Years 5 and 6. The pace of teaching is fast, there is a good level of challenge and high expectations of each pupil. The assessment systems are helping all staff to match their teaching more closely to pupils' different needs. This is now more successful with average pupils, but some work is too difficult for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and some is not challenging enough for the more able pupils. Target setting systems are supporting teachers well in raising their expectations. In the best examples, pupils have an extremely good understanding of what they need to do to improve. In others, targets are not written clearly enough for pupils to understand them.

The school has introduced several new strategies to improve provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These are in the very early stages and have yet to be evaluated or to have had a consistent impact on pupils' progress. Individual education plans (IEP) now follow a consistent format through the school: staff are becoming more skilled in producing them for themselves, although some targets remain too general. The school has clear plans to deploy teaching assistants more flexibly.

Attendance rates have increased this term by 1.5 % although they remain below average. The increase is due to a range of effective new strategies. These include the production of a clear policy, a close partnership with the local authority (LA) education welfare officers and the targeting of specific pupils with high rates of absence. There is an increased emphasis on attendance in communicating with parents as well as the introduction of effective reward systems.

Support from the LA is good. The appointment of the associate headteacher works very well and has ensured continuity across key changes of staff. The LA provides a good range of external specialists and supports the school systematically in monitoring progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Shepherd  
Additional Inspector