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Mr S Kidwell
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Kidwell

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 17 July 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the staff and pupils who gave up their time to talk to me.

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 15 and 16 January 2008, the school was asked to do the following.

- Raise pupils' standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Ensure that teaching and learning are of at least consistently good quality, including the contribution made by support staff.
- Further improve the management of pupils' behaviour, especially the behaviour of pupils with a statement of special educational need for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising pupils' achievement. Good progress has also been made in managing pupils' behaviour.

The school continues to build on the strengths identified at the last inspection. In particular, the headteacher, ably supported by the assistant headteachers, provides a clear vision focused sharply on improvement. Under his leadership the school is moving forward strongly. Support from the local authority (LA) in the form of the Intensive Support Programme is working well in helping the school to improve. A strong spirit of partnership is evident.

The school has concentrated its efforts on raising standards and achievement in Key Stage 2 as its main priority. The latest unvalidated results in the Key Stage 2 tests show that standards are likely to remain low overall but with significant improvement in mathematics and science. This year more pupils attained the expected levels and the school predicts that it will exceed its targets. Teacher assessments based on outcomes from the school's wealth of assessment data, and evidence gathered during this monitoring visit, indicate that standards in English are also set to rise, albeit not as steeply as in mathematics or science. The pupils' legacy of very low skills in literacy, especially writing, is presenting stubborn resistance to improvement. The school recognises this and has produced a detailed action plan for improving pupils' standards in literacy. The latest results in tests and tasks at the end of Key Stage 1 mirror those of previous years in writing and mathematics. In reading, however, they appear to have improved significantly because the school has worked hard to develop its reading resources to engage pupils more actively in reading.

Procedures for checking on pupils' progress have been improved and now give a clearer picture of the attainment and achievement of groups of pupils and individuals. Any underachievement is now identified and tackled much more rapidly. The data show clearly that throughout Key Stage 2 pupils' achievement is improving rapidly.

The quality of teaching and learning is improving. More teaching is now consistently good. However, it is taking time for this improved teaching to impact fully on learning because of pupils' legacy of very low standards and previous poor attitudes to learning. A rigorous monitoring programme has been introduced by the headteacher and governing body with the support of the LA, with the outcomes used to identify strategies for improving the quality of teaching. Lessons show more consistency in planning, the use of learning objectives and the matching of tasks to suit pupils' needs and abilities. The best practice is shared as a model to raise understanding of what good and effective teaching looks like. Teaching assistants are now attached to one particular class and work closely under the direction and in support of the class teacher. The result is that teaching assistants are not only working more effectively but also feel more valued.

The school is working hard to improve behaviour. Staffing is more stable so that the use of supply teachers is now the exception rather than the rule in many classes. Pupils with a statement of special educational need for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties are no longer taught separately but are fully integrated into mainstream classes. This gives them a model of expected classroom behaviour and they have responded positively. For the first time the school is also checking on their academic progress; this is giving their levels of self-esteem a welcome boost. The establishment of a behaviour support team led by two teaching assistants has had a positive effect. They are carrying out an audit of behaviour to identify areas of particular concern so that appropriate targeted support and actions can be put in place. The school is also developing a programme of social and emotional support within the curriculum. Pupils really value the improvements and were keen to point out how much calmer the school is.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Wall
Additional Inspector