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Mrs S Tate
The Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Tate

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 June 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 your chair of governors and school improvement advisor for their help and to the pupils, particularly the group I met, for their friendliness and openness.

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 27 and 28 November 2007, the school was asked to:

- improve the achievement of pupils throughout the school in writing, mathematics and science
- improve the quality of teaching by ensuring work challenges pupils of all abilities, especially the higher attaining pupils
- use assessment information consistently to plan appropriate work for pupils
- extend the role that teachers and governors play in monitoring the work and performance of the school.

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 the pupils' achievement.

The greatest progress has been made in developing assessment. There was much to do and a few teachers are still not totally confident in assessing the levels at which pupils are working. However, this is improving and assessments are becoming more accurate. Pupils' learning is now checked regularly and careful records kept so that potential underachievement can be quickly identified. The school has ensured that more able pupils are included in this process as many of them were not doing as well

as they should. Good strategies are in place to help potential underachievers of all abilities to get back on course. The effectiveness of these interventions is monitored effectively to ensure that the best use is being made of staff time.

The improvements to assessment have enabled teachers to match work more accurately to pupils' needs. This is still inconsistent and teaching is not yet good enough to enable all pupils to close past gaps in their learning. However, an effective start has been made and good levels of challenge for pupils of all abilities were observed in most classes visited. The overall quality of teaching has improved significantly. In particular, teachers are, to quote a pupil, 'making their lessons more interesting'. Pupils are now much more actively involved in their learning. They recognise the change when they said, 'We just used to sit and listen and copy from the board.' Another added, 'We used to watch science experiments on DVD, but now we do them ourselves.'

The improvements to assessment and teaching have led to pupils' progress accelerating. However, many are still catching up from past underachievement and standards are still broadly average and achievement inadequate. Leaders have set extremely challenging targets to try to close the gap as quickly as possible. Although these targets are largely being met in writing, which has been a focus for the school since before the previous inspection, they are not being met in mathematics or science.

The monitoring role of governors is developing well, although they have not yet had the promised training from the local authority. A consultant headteacher, who was allocated to the school at the end of last term, has been very helpful, particularly in training middle managers to carry out their monitoring role. They have now taken this on board and there is a clear programme of monitoring, involving managers at all levels.

The local authority statement of action in response to the inspection in November 2007 was judged unsatisfactory by HMI. It was required to be amended and the revised version made available for the inspector during this visit, but the authority was unable to present it. Changes in local authority personnel have hindered the effectiveness of their assistance, but good support systems are now in place. Particularly useful has been the work of literacy and numeracy consultants, who have assisted leaders in improving provision in these subjects. The school improvement advisor, who has been with the school since the end of January, is supporting the headteacher well in her drive to raise standards.

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

Yours sincerely

John D Eadie
Additional Inspector