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Dr S Sissons
The Headteacher
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Dear Dr Sissons

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 12 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 the staff who I met, the chair of governors and, of course, the pupils I talked to.

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 31 October 2007, the school was asked to:

- increase the progress made by lower attaining pupils by ensuring all the work of the school focuses on all pupils achieving challenging targets in every year group
- improve teaching and learning by ensuring all lessons are productive, involve reviews of learning and make links to pupils' targets.

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. Standards remain broadly average and achievement is now satisfactory.

The school has made considerable efforts to improve assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress. Good systems have been implemented which are having a positive impact on achievement. These systems are rigorous but easy to use, which has enabled all staff to identify which groups are still underachieving and where progress has been made. The vast majority of pupils know what they are expected to achieve and are able to discuss their own progress. Teachers challenge pupils about their targets in lessons and pupils respond knowledgeably about what they need to do to improve.

The school is very aware of how far it still needs to go to embed assessment procedures so that all plans for individual student improvement and related interventions are as effective as they need to be to raise standards faster. Good training is being provided to address these issues, especially in relation to matching lesson activities to individual pupil needs. Good support has been provided by the school leadership team to monitor progress across both of the key points for improvement identified in the last inspection. This is having a marked effect on improving important aspects of provision. The school knows it has to use the strengths in its specialist subjects more effectively to raise standards in other areas of the curriculum.

My visits to a sample of classrooms confirmed that the quality of teaching has improved. Where teaching engages pupils and challenges them to be more responsible for their work, pupils respond well and the pace of the lesson is brisk. Through their marking, staff are now more effective in sharing the next steps in pupils' learning. However, inconsistencies remain in how teachers use assessment information to improve learning in lessons. The school has already planned good quality support to improve this. Work is increasingly better tailored to pupils' needs, including the more able.

Support provided by the local authority (LA) is good. The action plan was judged to be satisfactory and the LA has increased the amount of time which the consultants spend in school providing a tight focus on the key areas requiring most improvement. This has included the work of a consultant headteacher whose contribution was welcomed by the school in helping it to implement its improved teaching and learning strategy. This support is helping the school to make rapid improvements in the quality of its provision. The LA is confident that the leadership of the school can deliver the necessary improvements to raise standards and achievement.

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

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm
Her Majesty's Inspector