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Mrs K Offer
The Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Offer

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 9 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 particular thanks to the staff, governors and pupils for their warm welcome.

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 11 and 12 December 2007, the school was asked to:

- improve teaching so that it consistently provides better challenges to pupils, and ensure that assessment information informs teachers' planning
- ensure pupils' work is marked more consistently and that teachers set individual learning targets so pupils know how to improve their work
- develop the monitoring roles of managers and governors.

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.

After the last inspection, the pace of improvement was slow at first, as the outcomes dented the confidence and morale of the staff who took a little time to adjust to the situation. You have supported them well through a difficult period, with the result that the staff are now a united team, all pulling together to move the school forward. There has been a good focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning, especially in mathematics, which was highlighted as a particular area of weakness in the last inspection. Most of the lessons observed during this visit provided good challenge for all groups of pupils. Teachers made effective use of assessment information to plan activities that matched the needs of different groups. This was particularly effective in Year 2, where the two teachers work as a team to plan the next stage in learning for all pupils, each of them planning for and focusing on

particular ability groups in lessons. Pupils made good progress in these lessons because they were engaged in hands-on activities, using a good range of practical resources. They were well motivated, enthusiastic and thoroughly enjoyed the lessons. Pupils in Year 3 made good progress in tackling a mathematical investigation which required them to work collaboratively to identify emerging patterns as they explored aspects of number. Observations in the mixed Reception/Year 1 classes showed that the school is maintaining good quality provision for children in the Foundation Stage, while also providing appropriate additional challenge for the Year 1 pupils.

Assessment data and pupils' work show that good teaching and good progress are not yet consistent in every lesson and every subject. Although progress is beginning to accelerate in response to improvements in teaching, standards in Year 3, for example, remain below average. Standards in Year 2 are significantly higher than they were in 2007, but the school's own assessments show this is a relatively stronger cohort of pupils. Nevertheless, these pupils have made at least satisfactory, and in some cases good, progress during the past year. The new tracking system that is still being embedded illustrates this progress clearly. What it does not show is how well pupils have achieved in relation to their starting points. This is because the school does not yet have reliable assessments of each pupil's attainment on entry to Reception. As a result, it is not clear whether the whole-school targets that are set for pupils each year are sufficiently challenging.

Each pupil now has personal targets to reach in reading, writing and mathematics. Some pupils know their targets, others know where to find them, but few actually use them to help improve their learning. This is because they are not yet fully embedded in everyday practice. Teachers do not refer to them enough or link them in with the learning objectives for lessons. Senior staff track pupils' progress carefully and identify pupils who are not making expected progress. Discussions with class teachers focus on the reasons for this and senior staff then decide on appropriate intervention strategies to meet pupils' specific needs. The school has begun to evaluate the impact of this work on pupils' progress. Initial findings are that it is making a positive difference.

The school has introduced a rigorous marking policy which is not yet rooted in practice. The best examples show pupils how well they have done and what they need to do to improve. In some cases, teachers give indiscriminate praise which does not give a true indication of pupils' achievements, nor does it explain how they could do better. The school now needs to ensure greater consistency in the way the policy is implemented.

The school has worked closely with the local authority which has provided a wide range of support to develop the roles of school managers and governors. For example, the LA has appointed an additional experienced governor to support the development of governors as 'critical friends'. The school has taken steps to involve governors more actively in monitoring the school's performance through a planned programme of visits which are due to begin in September 2008. The mathematics coordinator has been supported well in developing her monitoring role and has carried out lesson observations and examined pupils' work and teachers' planning.

This has helped to identify where improvement is needed. In general, subject leaders still need to develop their monitoring skills in order to evaluate the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress.

The local authority's statement of action fulfils requirements and sets out a clear agenda and timetable for improvement. The school values much of the help that has been provided but would welcome the opportunity to have a greater say in future plans to ensure that they are tailored more closely to the school's needs.

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

Yours sincerely

Carole Skinner
Additional Inspector