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Mrs Frances Larner
The Headteacher
Holyport Manor School
Ascot Road
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Dear Mrs Larner

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave myself and Angela Corbett when we 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 our visit. Please pass on our thanks to members of your staff, representatives from the governing body and pupils who spoke with us during the day.

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 22 and 23 May 2007, the school was asked to make improvements in three key areas. These were to ensure: that in all lessons, teaching provides sufficient challenge and pace and fully meets the wide range of pupils' needs so that they can achieve of their best; consistent use of whole school systems so that all pupils are clear about how to meet their targets; and that statutory requirements are met and the governing body critically evaluates the effectiveness of the school's provision.

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.

At the time of the last inspection the headteacher had been in post for a relatively short period. The headteacher's dynamism, tenacity and drive has been at the heart of the school's improvement. She is well supported in this by her leadership team and the other staff. She is highly regarded by the governing body and this developing partnership underpins good capacity for improvement to continue. While levels of attainment are well below the chronological age of most of the pupils, they

are achieving well in relation to their individual needs and capabilities. This is reflected, for instance, in Year 6 and Year 9 national tests, Entry Level examinations, ASDAN and the other forms of accreditation, such as Accreditation for Life and Living, they have gained in 2007 and have already achieved or are on track to achieve in the current year. The most recent Ofsted inspection report of the residential special school in June 2008 judged the overall quality of the boarding provision to be good.

Staff know the pupils very well. Good relationships exist between staff and pupils, and behaviour is sensitively and well managed. Consequently, pupils said that they greatly enjoy their time at school, and this was also evident from observing them in lessons. Progress has been made in teaching and learning across the school since the last inspection, and it is particularly noticeable in the Foundation Stages and Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils make good progress in these Stages because teaching is differentiated well and activities have pace. Good use is made of time through careful planning, clear routines and smooth transitions between activities. All pupils now have their own care plans, which include individual education plans (IEPs). Staff use these well to plan and cater for the differing and often very complex needs of the pupils. In the secondary school and, particularly in the sixth form, teaching and learning is more variable and there are some pockets of weaker practice, where for example, insufficient focus is given to ensuring that all learners are suitably engaged throughout the lesson.

The leadership team is aware of this variability and is taking effective steps to support and challenge practice which is below expectations. Monitoring has a sharp focus on ensuring that there are more challenging learning goals which are suitably matched to pupils' needs and which support their independent learning skills. Staff are willing to take on board constructive comments and this is evident in their improved practice. The successful focus on increasing the number of staff and improving staff-pupil ratios has also contributed to better teacher and learning. Specialist support assistants generally work well with class teachers to maximise learning opportunities for pupils, although some instances have been identified through lesson monitoring where they could have been deployed to greater effect.

Senior staff have taken time to review previous systems of monitoring pupils' academic progress, agree a new whole school approach and prepare for its full implementation from September 2008. A great deal of importance has been placed on ensuring that teachers' assessments are accurate and that pupils' progress has been secured. This has been addressed through staff training, the introduction of a new electronic recording system and through improved subject leadership with the introduction of exemplar subject portfolios. The school recognises that the full impact of the new systems for assessment and monitoring pupil progress have yet to be realised. The consistently high quality of IEPs and care plans contribute very positively to both pupils' academic achievement, personal development and their well-being. Pupils are aware of their targets through their involvement in target setting, annual reviews and daily classroom use. Pupils make most progress when teachers include these targets in their lesson planning; this particularly applies in the primary phases.

The dedicated governing body has worked hard to address areas for improvement, with evidence of demonstrable progress in the governance of the school. A thorough programme to review and ensure that all policies are up to date has been undertaken by the school. While there is still more work to do, statutory duties of the governing body are now being fulfilled and the majority of policies are in the process of being reviewed or have already been endorsed by governors. Evidence of progress can be seen, for instance, in the more standardised and effective working of governing body committees. Committees now have clear targets for action and good systems have been established to track progress. Steps have been taken to enable governors to deepen their understanding of the school and this can be seen, for example, in the rolling programme of speakers from services, such as speech and language therapy, invited to some committee meetings. The new and comprehensive three-year school development plan enables staff and governors to take a planned and strategic approach to school improvement, with clear measures in place to hold each other to account. The process of self-evaluation has improved and it now enables staff and governors to have a more accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses and what steps are needed to secure continued school improvement.

External support is valued by the school. Specialist support services work well with school staff to provide very good support to meet the varied and complex needs of the pupils. However, the support provided by the Connexions Service is limited. Evidence of good partnership working with the local authority can be seen in the progress made in securing planning permission for a new school to be built by 2010. In the interim, the governors and staff are doing their best to ensure that, within its limitations, the existing accommodation provides a positive environment for learning.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Kennedy".

John Kennedy
Her Majesty's Inspector