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Mrs E Lewis
The Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Lewis

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 8 July 2008, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. The cheerful courtesy of your staff and pupils made my task easier and more enjoyable.

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 4 and 5 July 2007, the school was asked to:

- improve teaching, particularly the level of challenge and use of assessments to plan for different ability groups and guide pupils about how to improve
- ensure that leaders at all levels develop the skills to evaluate teaching and provision critically, tackle remaining weaknesses and secure further improvements quickly
- review the science provision so as to identify and tackle weaknesses
- monitor boys' achievements closely, especially in Years 3 to 6.

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.

With valuable support from the local authority (LA) and as part of the Intensifying Support Programme (ISP), the school has developed more rigorous systems of assessment. These are now used consistently to track individual and group progress and to identify trends to which the school then responds constructively. The decision to place responsibility for assessment and tracking with class teachers has strengthened links between assessment and teaching. Schemes of work and lesson plans build more securely on pupils' current levels of attainment, while ensuring sound coverage of National Curriculum content and targets. Further training is

planned to ensure that all teachers and teaching support staff use assessment data confidently and effectively.

Pupils work in mixed ability groups when appropriate. Close attention is paid to middle and lower ability pupils, using regular assessment to identify areas of knowledge and skills development in particular need of support, such as understanding of shape and space in mathematics. Both in the planning and in practice, care is taken to vary the style of activity often enough to keep most pupils engaged and to support a variety of learning styles. Pupils feel that they are well guided and say that they know what they must do to improve. They have confidence in their teachers and are keen to learn. The school acknowledges that more can be done in lessons and through the marking of written work to challenge and extend more able pupils. There are examples of good practice but this aspect of teaching and learning is uneven.

Subject leaders have benefited from LA consultancy and training and from clear job specifications and lines of accountability. In their monitoring of curriculum provision and in their lesson observation logs, subject leaders highlight strengths and propose appropriate strategies for further development. There is variation in the quality of evaluation, with some focusing more on presentation and administration than on what makes for effective teaching and learning. In-school data indicates that new resources and targeted training to improve identified areas of relative weakness are beginning to have an impact on progress and standards.

In science, positive steps have been taken to strengthen planning, teaching and opportunities for investigation and enquiry. Pupils' books and folders show evidence of carefully recorded practical work and pupils speak enthusiastically about science projects, such as the investigations into mini-beasts and bacteria. The impact of some recent decisions, including the switch to new course books, has still to be seen. The profile of science in the school has been raised and there is a commitment to ensuring that science does not lose ground as the school implements the new National Curriculum framework.

Relative achievement by boys and girls varies year on year. There is a higher proportion of boys than girls on the special needs list, but there is a more equal gender balance amongst gifted and talented pupils. Many boys find it difficult to maintain focus and attention to detail in 'long writing' and it was noticeable in the lessons observed during inspection that boys tended to lose concentration relatively quickly. Leadership and management are aware of the challenge, and the comparative performance of boys and girls is carefully monitored. Targeted teaching strategies are needed to ensure that the pace of lessons is consistently brisk enough and the activities sufficiently varied to keep boys as well as girls on task.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in supporting continued improvement.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham
Her Majesty's Inspector