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The Executive Headteacher
Lubbins Park Community Primary School
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Dear Mr Larret

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave me when I inspected your school on 5 February 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. In addition, I should like to thank Mr Taverner, governors and pupils for their assistance during my visit and the local authority (LA) advisers who met with me.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

As a result of the inspection on 11-12 June 2008, the school was asked to eradicate weaknesses in teaching and learning, ensure that accurate assessment data is used to monitor pupil progress, and ensure that the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of provision in Key Stage 2 secures improved standards and achievement.

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.

The inspection in June 2008 reported children's low starting points on entry to the nursery and the good progress made during their time there. Despite this good start, standards in Key Stages 1 and 2 have been significantly below the national average for some years. In 2007, in Key Stage 1, there was a marked improvement in standards in reading, writing and mathematics, all of which were in line with the national average. However, the following year, standards fell but because of the small numbers of pupils in the year group and the much higher proportion with learning difficulties, a comparison with previous years has to be treated with caution. Results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 6 improved significantly in 2008 when the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level nearly doubled. Whereas previously few pupils had reached the higher levels, nearly a fifth did so in English and mathematics in 2008. Standards, while still well below average, are beginning to improve. Although the LA and school data indicate that pupils completing the national tests in Key Stage 2 in 2008 made satisfactory progress, the

rate of progress is not consistent in all years. Work seen during the visit indicates that often too little is demanded of pupils in terms of both the quality and quantity of their work and that weaknesses persist in number skills and writing, as identified in the last inspection. Although marking is regular, its quality varies. Very often it fails to indicate in sufficient detail what pupils are doing well or what they need to do next to improve. In addition, marking rarely indicates to pupils their level of attainment or makes reference to their targets.

During the autumn term the school experienced the long term absence of one teacher and the tragic death of another. The school community deserves commendation for its resilience in dealing with these traumatic and challenging events. Teachers responded positively to the re-organisation of classes and willingly took on new responsibilities, sometimes with little previous experience of the key stage or its curriculum. HMI visited all Key Stage 1 and 2 classes, and teaching and learning were satisfactory or better in all five. This judgement concurs with the school's own view. In the most effective lessons, teachers planned in detail to meet pupils' individual needs and the good pace of their delivery and varied range of activities ensured that pupils were interested and engaged. In these lessons, teachers' questioning was lively, well-informed and directed to ensure the involvement and participation of all the pupils. In other lessons, planning was less detailed and the learning activities less challenging. Pupils did not always have enough opportunity or stimulus to think critically or independently. In most lessons, teaching assistants were deployed effectively. Close monitoring of lessons and regular coaching by LA consultants and senior leaders have been successful in raising teaching quality. The school is now rightly giving priority to the training of teaching assistants and knows that there needs to be more consistently good teaching if standards are to continue to rise.

Guidance from LA consultants has helped to increase the accuracy of teachers' assessments and improve the systems for tracking pupils' progress. As a result, the school is now better able to identify pupils at risk of underachieving and to target its resources accordingly. Expectations of pupils' academic achievement are also rising. However, the effectiveness with which teachers use assessment information to plan learning activities that are closely related to pupils' abilities continues to vary.

In the continued absence of the substantive headteacher, the executive headteacher, assisted by a LA support headteacher, has gained the confidence of teachers, pupils and governors. The collaborative leadership of the two headteachers provides the school with the clear direction and increased ambition it needs to raise standards. Monitoring and self-evaluation are now more rigorous. Consequently, the school has a more accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses and is able to identify what it needs to do to improve and to prioritise its actions. The single central record indicating necessary checks on all those working with the children is now in place. Vacancies on the governing body have been filled and, because of training by the LA and the new committee structure, the governing body is becoming more effective. In particular, governors are beginning to challenge the school on aspects of its work and, like the executive headteacher, they now communicate formally with

parents through a newsletter. Budget management has also improved. Spending priorities are linked to raising standards and longer term financial planning takes full account of the projected decline in pupil numbers.

Systems for monitoring and improving attendance have also improved. However, too many children still fail to attend regularly. In this aspect of its work, the school has not received enough help from the LA. In other areas, the LA's statement of action is providing a secure basis for the school's improvement. The collaboration between the school and the LA and the effective co-ordination of support, have ensured that the LA's guidance to staff and governors has been consistent and well directed to particular needs. The LA has realistically high and achievable expectations of the school and has rightly judged when to press for more rapid improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Rhona Seviour
Her Majesty's Inspector