

Cambridge
Education
Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge CB1 2RS

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01223 578500
Direct F 01223 578501
risp.inspections@camb-ed.com



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Mrs Tania Johnson
Horringer Court Middle School
Glastonbury Road
Bury St. Edmunds
Suffolk
IP33 2EX

Dear Mrs Johnson,

Grade 3 monitoring of your school on 24/06/2009

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on the 24 of June, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I would like you to extend my thanks to staff and pupils for the helpful way in which they approached the day.

Horringer court is a small middle school. Together with others in the county it is due to close when a two-tier system is introduced in 2013. The current headteacher was new in post at the last inspection and has moved quickly to address issues which were identified. As a result many changes have been made to improve provision. Because of this achievement is improving and standards are beginning to rise.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

As a result of the inspection on 16-17 April 2008, the school was asked to:

- Improve the achievement of pupils, particularly in Key stage 2 and those who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language
- Improve the quality of learning by providing lessons that consistently challenge and engage. Eliminate the inconsistencies in the quality of marking
- Provide clear and easy access to assessment information for staff and governors
- Address the inappropriate behaviour of a small but significant minority of pupils through more consistent approaches to behaviour management.

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 pupils' achievement. Having been inadequate at the last inspection, behaviour is now good.

Historical data indicate a decline in the progress made by pupils at key stage 2 in 2008, particularly in mathematics and science. However the data also indicate that

standards are improving, and were at or a little above national averages with an improving trend. The school's own data indicate further improvements for 2009. For the first two years of key stage 3, in years 7 and 8, the school's own monitoring data indicate that progress accelerates as pupils move through the school and that they attain standards that are correspondingly higher. When they leave the school, they have attained standards higher than expected. Those students whose first language is not English are supported well by specialist staff so that their attainment quickly matches that of their peers. Classroom observations and work scrutiny made during inspection indicate that overall progress is at least satisfactory.

This improvement has been aided by the introduction of a more robust system to monitor and evaluate pupils' progress. All staff have access to this information, and it is used to provide students with targets and monitor the progress of whole groups or subjects. Pupils say they understand the targets they are given. However classroom observations indicate that the use to which this information is put in class is not consistent. Some teachers use this information very well to ensure that teaching is tailored to the needs of the most and least able, but this is not yet fully established across the school.

The school, supported by the local authority, has put much effort into the improvement of teaching. The proportion of good or better classes has increased. In addition to many professional development events, the lesson observation system is now used more systematically to evaluate classes and identify areas for improvement. However the observation process places too much emphasis on the teaching and not enough on learning. Opportunities to accurately evaluate the effects of teaching on learning and on the standards reached are not fully exploited. Despite improved monitoring, inconsistencies of marking and the setting of homework remain, although pupils report that they have improved since the last inspection.

The most significant improvement has been in behaviour. This was judged inadequate at the last inspection, with a significant effect on learning in class. Behaviour is now good. The school is calm, movement between classes is orderly, and pupils are relaxed in playgrounds. In class, poor behaviour no longer disrupts learning. These changes have been brought about by a significant amount of professional development. Pupils now understand where the boundaries are, what is acceptable and what is not. Sanctions are applied evenly by staff and the consequences of poor behaviour are well understood by all.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath
Her Majesty's Inspector