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Ms Audrey Chamberlain
Interim headteacher
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Dear Ms Chamberlain

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 school

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school with an additional inspector on 2 December 2009, for the time you gave to our discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Thanks also to students, the chair of governors and the local authority who were able to help give us a good insight into the school's work.

The senior leadership team has been restructured from September 2009 and is made up of the headteacher, four assistant headteachers and bursar. An interim headteacher was appointed to the school at half term. A new chair of governors was recently appointed.

As a result of the inspection on 19-20 November 2008, the school was asked to:

- monitor the planned improvements to the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning so that all pupils achieve as well as they can
- ensure that all managers and governors play a full role in evaluating the schools effectiveness
- improve the quality of teaching by ensuring learning objectives are precise and clearly understood by pupils.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made inadequate progress in making improvements and inadequate progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Students' attainment is low but the school is increasingly developing opportunities for accreditation including GCSEs. Progress made by some students is good but is inadequate in other cases as teaching is inconsistent. In the more successful lessons observed planning and assessment supports progress well and individuals are challenged effectively. Teaching assistants were given specific briefings to support students and lessons were delivered with pace and enthusiasm. Students were clear about what they were learning and understood what they needed to do to make better progress.

The personal development of students is a high priority in the school. Students generally behave well and complete the tasks set. Staff care a great deal for students, good relationships exist in lessons and students feel supported. The engagement and enjoyment in lessons, too often, does not translate into satisfactory academic progress. Learning outcomes in the less successful lessons are not specific enough and assessment does not inform the planning of individual learning experiences and so progress is slow in these lessons. While planning of lessons is much improved it still requires significant development. The monitoring of teaching and learning does not yet have enough impact on improvements in progress made by students.

Targets are now being used increasingly in the school but this is at a very early stage. The school has started to monitor its work more effectively but this is also at an early stage. The evidence of school improvement prior to September 2009 is very limited. The school has made better progress particularly since the interim headteacher was appointed. This has given the assistant headteachers greater freedom to undertake their responsibilities. There is still however not enough impact on students' progress and on improving teaching and learning.

The governing body is developing rapidly in order to be better able to challenge and hold the school to account. The new chair of governors is clear about the work required to improve things and has made a good start. Policies and the work of the school need to be monitored more effectively to ensure practice results in the desired outcomes.

A systematic approach to reviewing statements and the setting of targets has begun. Recently partner agencies have helped identify the changing needs of students so planning can be more effective. The curriculum is being reviewed and more appropriate schemes of work are being developed.

The school has sports and personal, social and health education (PSHE) specialism. The sports specialism has had a positive impact in the school. Students' progress in this area has improved. There are also increasing links with other areas in the school for example in maths. Plans to develop teaching across the school utilising the good practice found in physical education are also developing. The PSHE element of the specialism is less well developed so far.

The local authority has set up a focus group to give specific support to the school and provided advisory time to support appropriately. The school improvement partner has provided the school with clear indicators about poor progress and guidance for development. The appointment of the interim headteacher and support for the governing body have had a positive impact on the school.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Scott
Her Majesty's Inspector