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Peter De Rosa  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr De Rosa

### Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when we inspected your school on 12 November 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during our visit. The meetings that we had with you, the staff and the chair of governors were very helpful, as were the lesson observations that we undertook. Please pass on our special thanks to everyone.

As a result of the inspection on 29 and 30 September 2008, the school was asked to:

- ensure that teachers use the information on pupils' progress in their planning to provide challenging activities that meet pupils' individual needs
- ensure the curriculum is effectively developed and monitored to ensure it continually meets the needs of all pupils, especially in the sixth form
- ensure the governing body effectively fulfil their monitoring and strategic development role.

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

There have been significant changes in staffing and the premises since the inspection in September 2008. At that time, a new headteacher had been appointed to start in the following January. He has now been in post for almost three terms. The governors have elected a new chair this term and some members of the governing body are newly appointed. Major building work was completed in time for the beginning of this term, providing the school with a large, two-storey extension.

This is the second year that the school has provided education for a small group of students who are above compulsory school age.

Pupils' attainments are formally assessed twice annually and the tracking information suggests that pupils made at least satisfactory progress in their learning and personal development over the past academic year. However, the school has not been in the practice of setting individual targets for the current academic year or relevant key stage, and so it is difficult to judge if pupils' achievements are better than satisfactory because the results have not been analysed against the progress that the pupils were expected to make. The current range of assessments provide information required to track pupils' progress, but the monitoring of it needs to be done more than twice a year, in order to keep an eye on any potential underachievement.

The school has made good progress in ensuring that teachers use the information on pupils' progress in their planning to provide challenging activities that meet a range of individuals' needs. This is because the headteacher has established clear structures for planning and monitoring lessons that have had a very positive effect. There is greater consistency in planning for different ability groups and interests. Learning objectives are more appropriately referenced to P-levels and National Curriculum levels. This gives staff a clearer idea of what will push pupils on further in their learning. Well-targeted training means that communication and behaviour management systems are used more systematically and effectively by staff. This is all contributing to greater staff confidence and higher expectations of pupils. Staff reflect upon their own practice in order to remove any problems or barriers that pupils may be having with their learning.

Having established clear curricular objectives in their plans, teachers now need to pay more attention to planned opportunities to teach and assess a wider range of personal targets. This is already in hand. The revised format for annual reviews of pupils' statement of special educational needs is ready for implementation, with specific evaluations and targets across all areas of academic and social learning. This is a good example of how the headteacher is working with the staff team, building upon well-established initiatives to improve practice and ensuring that systems complement one another as they are developed and implemented.

The curriculum for students above compulsory school age in the sixth form has been slow to develop. This is partly because the status of this provision has not been fully addressed by the local authority. As a result, the programme for these students is based on the Key Stage 4 curriculum rather than on the particular things that they need to do and learn in preparation for life after school. Opportunities to give these students a separate identity and responsibility have been missed.

By establishing four new departments, the monitoring of the curriculum, as well as teaching and learning, have been enhanced. Heads of department regularly monitor the quality of provision in their areas and are accountable to the headteacher and

deputy for the quality of their evaluations. The headteacher and deputy provide good role models, training and support to the department heads. This is making a significant difference to what goes on in the classroom because, through the monitoring activity, department heads and teachers alike have a clearer understanding of one another's roles and responsibilities, as well as an appreciation of how this is improving their practice for the pupils. Staff report that this has raised morale and increased the pace of change.

Governors have become increasingly active in fulfilling their monitoring and strategic development role more effectively. The separate aspects of monitoring and evaluation are clearly set out in their plans. Governors are more frequent visitors to the school, with a clearer purpose and greater accountability to share what they find out. Additional training has been undertaken, including a range of courses for safeguarding pupils. This means that the governors have better-quality information from which to ask more challenging questions of the staff and of themselves. They have taken the lead in developing the school's promotion of community cohesion, making a good start to identifying the contexts in which the school is working. The chair of governors ensures that the single central record of checks on staff is in order. Governors now need to evaluate the school's work more thoroughly with reference to current government requirements, good practice guides and the impact of the school's improvement plans on outcomes for the pupils.

The local authority has provided significant support for the school over the past two years, particularly during the period of interim leadership. Their support has been effective in helping the school to get back on track and the intensive level of support is no longer required. The school is very much now standing on its own two feet.

The above examples of the effectiveness of actions taken since the last inspection, together with the suitability of plans for their next steps, indicate that the school has made good progress in improving its capacity to make further improvement. In addition, the particular leadership style of the headteacher has already paid dividends in regaining some of the good practice and staff energy that had been lost at the time of the last inspection. His work, together with that of the deputy headteacher and heads of department is much valued and respected by staff, who now have a clearer idea of how they can all make a positive difference to the outcomes for the pupils.

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

Heather Yaxley  
Her Majesty's Inspector