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Ms N Horton  
The Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Horton

### Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 6 October 2009 and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please thank the pupils and staff who gave their time to the discussions.

Since the last inspection there has been a change of leadership. There was a short period of interim headships until the new headteacher started in April 2009. A new leadership team has been in place since September 2009. This comprises the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher and an additional acting deputy headteacher.

As a result of the inspection on 1 and 2 October 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards in literacy, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6
- raise teachers' expectations of the more able children and make sure that they receive more challenging lessons
- improve target-setting procedures to ensure that pupils are clear about their next steps of learning.

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

In the most recent standardised tests for Year 6, pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science remained well below the most recent unvalidated national average for the year group. Whilst attainment in reading improved, standards in writing were exceptionally low, thus masking the positive progress made by the school on improving reading skills. Senior leaders fully recognise that these inadequate results reflect high levels of staff turbulence and inconsistencies in the



quality of teaching which have affected pupils' progress over time. Older pupils too feel that they have not always had the best possible deal when they have been taught by a number of different teachers over a short period. The new leadership team has put in place a series of well-considered interventions, designed to accelerate pupils' progress. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 are now grouped by ability for English and mathematics. Individuals have tutorials and one-to-one sessions to improve their progress. As a result, levels of attainment for the current Year 6, predicted as broadly average by the end of the academic year, are a significant improvement.

The new headteacher has placed considerable emphasis on the professional development and accountability of staff. Working in very close partnership with the local authority and using the expertise of their consultants, there has been a sharp focus on improving the quality of teaching. The senior leadership team has rigorously reviewed the school's tracking of pupils' progress. The members have introduced a new system that closely monitors trends or patterns and identifies individual pupils' performance precisely. By moderating judgements with their colleagues, teachers have gained confidence in gauging the levels at which their pupils are working. Senior leaders check that teaching is planned around rectifying gaps in progress and ensuring that lessons offer sufficient challenge. Pupils are set appropriate targets for English and mathematics and these are regularly reviewed and checked by senior staff. A focus on improving how the pupils' books are marked has been closely monitored and this has led to a greater dialogue with individuals. Most pupils now know what they need to do to move onto the next stage of their learning. However, this is not yet of a consistently good standard throughout the school.

Teachers are developing a wider variety of methods and activities to match students' learning styles. They understand that pupils need to be involved in their own learning to make the best progress. Encouraging pupils to talk to a partner about particular aspects of a lesson is helping to actively engage them in their learning. For example, a group of pupils talked to each other about doubling numbers and the conversation between them helped to consolidate this basic skill. Teachers share systematically the focus of the lesson with the class and this helps the pupils understand what they are expected to learn. Progress is good in classes where teachers' expectations are high. Pupils' learning reflects this in the good quality work the pupils produce.

Following the period of staff turbulence and a downturn in pupils' behaviour, the new headteacher rightly took a firm stance to halt the slide. Timely assistance from a behaviour consultant from the local authority and the appointment of a new inclusion manager have resulted in pupils being clear about what is expected of them and how unacceptable behaviour is tackled. The management of pupils in class is satisfactory and developing rapidly with senior staff supporting those teachers who are not always consistent in their practice. The approach to personal, social and



emotional education has been strengthened and pupils are developing an ability to express their feelings through circle time and drama sessions.

The new leadership team has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas requiring improvement. The team is very well motivated to seek further improvement and has effectively focused the school's efforts on its priorities. For example, the rigorous programme of lessons observations, work scrutiny and planning by the senior leadership team is being used effectively to improve the quality of teaching. Where lessons fall below an acceptable level a support plan is put in place to ensure that teachers understand what they need to do to improve. The enthusiastic middle managers express confidence in the improvements and demonstrate that they have the capacity to reinforce and consolidate them.

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

Lorna Brackstone  
Her Majesty's Inspector

