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Mrs Diana Denman
Headteacher
Fairmead School
Mudford Road
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Dear Mrs Denmam

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school, with an additional inspector, on 18 November 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 who, in discussion, gave us a good insight into life in the school.

At the time of the previous inspection the deputy headteacher had taken on the role of acting headteacher and led the school through a difficult time. The new headteacher took up her post in Easter 2009 and the deputy headteacher has been able to return to his substantive role in the school.

As a result of the inspection on 13 November 2008, the school was asked to:

- Ensure that all statutory requirements in relation to the curriculum are met.
- Implement rigorous assessment systems to determine pupils' attainments and use this data to ensure that lessons consistently feature learning activities that accelerate pupils' learning.
- Establish realistic, challenging targets for all pupils based on their prior achievements and develop a clear rationale to measure and evaluate all pupils' progress over time.
- Make school self-evaluation more effective by scrutinising more closely the findings of routine monitoring and by using these evaluations in ways that have the most impact on the school's development.

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.



Students are making satisfactory progress in lessons and are encouraged by teachers that demonstrate many skills in developing learning. Attainment is low but the new headteacher is rightly increasing the emphasis on students studying courses that enable them to progress further in education or employment such as GCSE examinations.

In the short time the headteacher has been in post, lesson planning and the understanding of ongoing assessment to informing planning has improved. Although there is still some way to go to establish this as consistent and embedded practice and the detail of planning needs to increase substantially, teachers have made rapid progress. Prior achievement information and P level assessments are now being used to develop more robust targets for students. Teachers demonstrated in lessons some high level skills in assessing students' progress through group discussions and encouraging students to verbalise and analysis experiences. Learning objectives are not yet clear enough for individual students and planning relates to task completion rather than learning outcomes.

The school has increased provision in modern foreign languages and is aware of the need to improve provision in science. There is, however, a clear development rational in the school to improve the curriculum, to identify more personalised curriculum pathways and match these to ensure students are well prepared for future learning and wider opportunities.

Self-evaluation by the headteacher is accurate and in just over a term she has established a clear way forward and prioritised key aspects and is developing roles across the school. There has been much work in laying foundations for future progress. Monitoring of lessons needs to have a greater focus on progress made by students and developing the analytical skills of practitioners at all levels. The school makes the best use of the buildings but some of the accommodation is in a poor state and the site layout does not help teaching and learning nor does it help promote a cohesive school community.

The headteacher highlighted support from the local authority (LA) as being very good, and analysis of notes of visit support this view. The LA also recognises that there is much to do in the school to ensure students achieve all that they can.

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

