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Mrs S Ellis  
Beauchamp Middle School  
Hawk Drive  
Bedford  
Bedfordshire  
MK41 7JE

Dear Mrs Ellis

### Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when Ann Taylor and I inspected your school on 14 December 2009 and for the information which you provided before and during our visit. Please pass on our thanks to your senior team and to all of the staff for their cooperation. Thank you also to the chair of governors for meeting with me at very short notice.

Since the last inspection two newly qualified teachers have joined the staff.

As a result of the inspection on 5-6 November 2008, the school was asked to:

Raise standards, especially in English and for more able pupils by:

- strengthening the systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and targeting actions to raise the overall quality of teaching;
- increasing the rigour and accuracy of the assessment of pupils' attainment; and
- ensuring that information gained from tracking pupils' progress is used more effectively.

This letter focuses on these aspects.

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.

Provisional results at the end of Year 6 indicate that pupils' standards rose in English in 2009 at both expected and higher levels. They rose from below average in 2008 to above average in 2009. The proportion of pupils achieving higher levels was in line with that found nationally. Writing standards, a major focus, improved because



of a greater emphasis on specific writing skills. However, standards in mathematics and science fell further from 2008, including at higher levels and in both subjects were considerably below the national average. Results in mathematics and science pointed to pupils making significantly less progress than pupils nationally. The school's targets were not met. The school's tracking shows that by the end of Year 8, fewer pupils reach higher levels in English, mathematics and science. Its projections point to standards being in line with national averages in 2010 in English and mathematics and below average in science by the end of Year 6 but evidence gathered during the inspection does not back this up. The large majority of lessons seen were no better than satisfactory and three were inadequate. Girls are still underperforming and Bangladeshi and African pupils significantly underperform. In mathematics there are almost as many pupils achieving Level 3's as Level 5's, according to local authority monitoring in November 2009. Improved tracking has led to more prompt identification of under-achieving pupils and those with skills gaps, and support for these pupils is in place.

The 13 lesson observations during the visit demonstrated the inconsistencies in teaching practice across lessons, subjects and year groups which are resulting in falling standards. Teaching has deteriorated since the last inspection. In particular, the quality of planning ranges from good to very poor. Too often, planning is cursory and fails to focus on the quality of learning. The school's tracking of pupils' progress has improved and is more accurate. Yet in a significant number of lessons seen, there was no evidence of the data being taken into account when planning tasks to match their needs, including those capable of reaching higher levels. Marking, which has not improved since the last inspection, too often does not tell pupils their achievements or how to move further forward in their learning. In the worst cases, it is superficial and with long gaps between marking. In good lessons, self- and peer-assessment is built into learning and is effective in promoting pupils' evaluative skills. In other lessons it is not planned carefully enough. Presentation of work matches the quality of teachers' expectations which are not regularly high enough. Homework is set very regularly but during one observation, in which pupils marked each others' work, the teacher was not able to gauge the extent of pupils' knowledge and understanding in order to inform future planning.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have implemented new systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching. The headteacher has overall responsibility for standards and subject leaders are accountable for standards in their subject area. However, the monitoring of teaching practices and the quality of pupils' learning and progress, together with the analysis of findings at senior and middle leadership are not sharp enough or regular enough. There is not sufficient direction by senior management of subject leaders' roles or high enough expectations of their performance. Evaluation of their impact is not robust enough. This has led to a lack of knowledge of the overall quality of teaching and where to target improvements. Ultimately, it has led to the leadership having insufficient impact on raising pupils' standards. The chair of governors understands that initiatives have not had the necessary impact and that the school is not

demonstrating a better capacity for improvement than when it was inspected in 2008. The school has some support from the local authority which regularly reviews the school's performance. The two newly qualified teachers are receiving appropriate guidance and support from the school.

The school, designated as a sports specialist college in September 2008, is making satisfactory progress towards its specialist college aims. 2009 teacher assessments show an increase in pupils' standards, with all pupils achieving Level 4 in physical education (PE), and a small percentage reaching higher levels by the end of Year 6. Satisfactory progress continues through Year 7 and 8. Priorities are being addressed, such as the use of new technology to record and analyse pupils' contribution. A cross curricular module is being introduced, encompassing PE, information and communications technology, science and mathematics. There is a developing link with two local sports colleges for gifted and talented pupils. All of these are contributing to moving the school forward in the quality of its provision. The appointment of a technician who is a sports science graduate is increasing the capacity for the head of department to identify professional development needs of the staff and to lead and manage the specialism effectively.

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

Lynne Blakelock  
Additional inspector