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Mr N Birch
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Birch

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school with Kate Robertson on 26 January 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit.

With 120 on roll, the school is bigger than it was when last inspected. Highview is still designated as a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, although many have additional learning difficulties, such as autism. Consequently, the local authority is conducting a public consultation exercise with a view to re-designating it as a school for pupils with complex learning needs. There have been important changes in the leadership and management of the school since 2008 and others are due to take effect shortly. The deputy headteacher, two assistant headteachers and three teachers with specific teaching and learning responsibilities have all been appointed to their current posts since September 2008. In addition, the school has federated with a special school for pupils with severe learning difficulties about six miles away. A single governing body has been responsible for both schools since November 2008. The headteacher of Highview has just been appointed executive headteacher of the federation with effect from the beginning of the summer term 2010. The federation is in the initial stage of the local authority's building schools for the future programme, which will result in Highview being relocated.

As a result of the inspection on 6–7 February 2008, the school was asked to:

- ensure that all lessons are well paced, with relevant and practical activities, so that pupils are always challenged to do the best they possibly can
- improve the curriculum by extending opportunities to take more examinations
- strengthen provision by improving and extending partnerships with all support services and mainstream schools.



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.

The new senior leadership team monitors classroom practice routinely and uses its findings to support individual teachers and to identify aspects of practice that would benefit from whole-school staff training. Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection as senior leaders have successfully helped teachers to raise their expectations by increasing the level of challenge in lessons. Although attainment remains low because of the nature of pupils' special educational needs, pupils make good progress. Attendance is broadly average and pupils enjoy their learning. Pupils put themselves in a good position to learn by being punctual for lessons and exceptionally well behaved, with very positive attitudes. They subsequently achieve well because they learn at a good pace. Classrooms are organised and lessons are well planned. Pupils understand what is expected of them and they follow well-established routines. Enthusiastic teachers stretch their pupils by ensuring that learning activities are varied and meet the needs of individuals. As a result, pupils are able to work independently or in pairs with negligible disruption and so time is used efficiently.

As the rate of learning has increased, the oldest pupils are better prepared for the accredited examinations that they follow. Over the past two years the school has widened the range of courses that it offers. Some of them are academic qualifications, such as Entry Level certification in humanities and GCSE art, while others, like 'Licence to Cook', are more vocational. A further innovation has seen the introduction of accreditations that recognise features of personal development. These include the senior sports leader award and 'Rookie Lifeguard' recognition.

A very few more capable pupils have their particular curriculum needs met via inclusion programmes with local schools. A bigger proportion of pupils benefit from links that promote their social awareness and communication skills. These links are representative of the many strong partnerships that the school has now established with schools and colleges, the local community and colleagues from other agencies, such as the health service. These partnerships are integral elements of the overall coherent and comprehensive package of support and guidance that enables pupils to benefit from their time at Highview and helps them to be well prepared for leaving school. The school was a safe and secure place at the time of the visit and met statutory requirements for safeguarding pupils.

The school is in a good position to move forward. Senior leaders have overseen the establishment of an ambitious school with high expectations. Well-qualified and effective middle leaders and managers ensure that all areas of the school function efficiently and with a clear sense of purpose and direction. Governors remain effective. Consequently, the school is well set to sustain its rate of improvement despite what promises to be a very challenging future.



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

Mike Kell
Additional inspector

