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Mrs J Moralee
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Moralee

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 11 February 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Would you also pass on my thanks to all of the pupils, staff and governors who helped to make my visit so enjoyable and interesting.

Since the previous inspection, the school has relocated to new purpose-built premises on a site approximately 4 miles from its original position. As a result, the school building is now fit for purpose, with a full range of specialist teaching areas, a designated post-16 area and therapy rooms, including physiotherapy and hydrotherapy facilities.

As a result of the inspection on 6 March 2008, the school was asked to:

- develop procedures and practice for assessing pupils' and students' progress so that teachers plan work that meets their needs more closely
- ensure that pupils know what they need to do to improve their learning skills
- develop the effectiveness and consistency of monitoring and evaluation by managers at all levels to raise achievement.

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 school continues to collect data on pupils' progress as at the time of the previous inspection. The data is now used very effectively to monitor the progress made by individuals and groups of pupils in a range of subjects and to inform planning in all lessons. This has resulted in an outstanding improvement in the use



of the data to ensure that all teaching meets pupils' needs more closely. The school monitors the progress of groups of pupils by such criteria as their primary special educational need, gender and ethnicity. As a result, the school is able to identify any groups which are at risk of underachieving and put interventions in place to address this. The systems are refined and sophisticated enough to then monitor the effectiveness of the interventions and their impact on improving progress. Robust planning procedures are based on teachers' thorough knowledge of pupils' communication preferences and abilities, P levels and National Curriculum levels, the Every Child Matters outcomes and aspects of Personal Thinking and Learning Skills. This ensures that assessment and planning fully support each other in lessons and over longer periods of time and have a significant impact on pupils' learning.

A range of strategies are employed to support feedback to pupils to enable them to understand how well they are doing and how they can improve. As a result, pupils are increasingly able to participate in evaluating their own learning in lessons and this was seen consistently through the visit. An exemplary instance of this was seen with a group of pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder who were able to say how well they had done during the day with respect to their individual targets. Some pupils are now starting to evaluate the progress of their classmates. Although very positive, this development is at an early stage. The Visual Annual Reviews provide a platform where pupils' involvement and inclusion is prioritised and maximises their participation in planning for their own future.

Monitoring, by the senior leadership group (SLG), of all aspects of the school's work, is thorough and lesson observations provide an accurate picture of the quality of teaching in the school. These observations provide valuable feedback and support for teachers to help them improve their practice. The best teaching seen during the inspection was well matched to pupil's needs, provided challenge and was accessible to all, promoting a good level of self-evaluation. Regular reviews of the curriculum have resulted in an increased number of qualifications being made available to pupils. These include; ASDAN (Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) qualifications, OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) mathematics and Entry Level Certificates. All students leave the sixth form with some form of externally recognised qualification.

The work of the Augmentative and Alternative Communication department in the school ensures that all pupils have access to high quality communication best suited to their needs. This is done through the use of the most up-to-date technology or alternative languages and systems such as British Sign Language, PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) and switches, amongst others.

The school's specialist subjects have had a significant impact on the work of the school as a whole. As well as a range of timetabled activities and well attended after school clubs, links have been established with several schools in the local area and as far a field as Greece and Malawi. Cross-curricular work is being developed, including through a project based on the 2012 Paralympics which involves links to

schools in Sweden, Poland and Romania and work in art, English and dance amongst other curriculum areas. Members of the school staff support the development of provision in other schools and have also successfully shared their expertise within the local authority and internationally.

Support from the local authority is most evident through the work of the school improvement partner who knows the school well and provides appropriate and informed challenge to the leadership of the school. The governing body also fulfils its role very effectively and has implemented well-conceived succession planning to enable smooth transitions as new governors join the team. The effectiveness and teamwork of the SLG, alongside improvements since the previous inspection and the well-founded plans for continued development, demonstrate that the school has a strong capacity to continue to improve.

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

David Muir
Her Majesty's Inspector