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Mrs M Collins
Headteacher
Hare Law School
Catchgate
Annfield Plain
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DH9 8DT

Dear Mrs Collins

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Hare Law School

Thank you for the help, which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 22 September 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information that you provided before and during the inspection. Please convey my thanks to the staff, pupils in the lower school and the students in the upper school who willingly gave of their time to talk with me.

Since the previous inspection, four new members of staff joined the school at the beginning of September 2010. There has also been a change to middle management, with an existing member of staff assuming the role of head of lower school from September of this year.

As a result of the inspection on 13 and 14 May 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement, which are set out in the annex to this letter.

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

Although pupils' attainment is low, which is typical for a special school of this type, their progress has been maintained at a satisfactory level and is now occasionally good. Overall, therefore, achievement is improving. This is the direct result of improved teaching across the school, which is now targeting more specific and active activities for all pupils in all lessons. This greater consistency in better quality teaching across the school is ensuring that the pupils are more attentive in lessons, and that they willingly engage in class and group discussions and individual writing activities, which demand sustained periods of concentration and attention. In almost



all lessons seen during this visit, the vast majority of pupils and students showed these personal qualities.

All the required checks for ensuring the safety of the pupils and students have been carried out in compliance with statutory requirements. However, not all this information is presented sufficiently clearly in the school's single central register and this, therefore, needs some minor amendments to make it easier for the school to use.

The school reacted quickly and decisively, following the previous inspection, to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Regular lesson observations by senior managers, which provided detailed feedback and actions for future improvements, have made a positive contribution to the good progress made in these areas. The local authority has also made a positive contribution through the continued professional development opportunities provided for the school. These actions have ensured that teachers' planning is more detailed and focused on providing a range of learning opportunities that are well matched to the learning needs of the pupils and students.

The attendance of pupils and students is still broadly average overall, as it was at the time of the previous inspection, but there have been improvements in both the overall attendance rate for the school and for targeted individuals. This is the direct result of collaborative work between the school and external support staff, and the tougher stance that the school has taken with some parents who have previously condoned their children's absence from school.

The procedures and processes for improving the assessment of pupils and students have progressed more slowly but they are, nevertheless, moving ahead satisfactorily. Senior leaders have extended their expertise in data collection and analysis and, as a result, the school now holds a greater range of information about pupils' and students' progress in lessons. However, the extent to which this is being used to identify specific learning targets for all pupils is yet to develop fully. This is due, in part, to the use of a new national scheme for comparing the progress profiles for pupils and students in special schools, which is still at the stage of being fully populated.

The quality of support from the local authority has been satisfactory overall. The joint work between the school and local authority visiting specialists on improving teaching and learning has been the most successful so far.

The areas for improvements from the previous inspection have been well targeted, which has ensured that progress has been made. The improved quality of monitoring and evaluation of provision by senior leaders and managers is helping to pinpoint accurately further improvements across the school.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Brian Blake
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2009

- Improve teaching, especially in science and mathematics by paying more attention to encouraging pupils to become active, rather than passive learners.
- Improve attendance, especially in Year 11.
- Ensure that all teachers make the best possible use of assessment data when setting individual targets and planning lessons.