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Mrs Joanna Ruse
Headteacher
Crawshaw School
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Dear Mrs Ruse

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 1 November 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Particular thanks to the students I met at lunchtime and the two 'ambassadors' who helped me find my way around school.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

As a result of the inspection in March 2007, the school was asked: to raise students' achievement and standards in Key Stages 3 and 4, particularly in science; to improve the proportion of good and better teaching and learning; and to improve the provision, outcomes and influence of the specialist status in humanities across the school. Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress overall in addressing the issues for improvement.

A permanent headteacher has taken up post since the inspection in March; she is the third headteacher in a year. Despite the changes in leadership, improvements have continued at pace and much-needed strategies and systems have been introduced that support progress in the three key areas for improvement. The senior leadership team has a clear strategic vision for the school, with well planned priorities for development, and middle managers are becoming more accountable and increasingly skilled at self-evaluation.

Good progress has been made in improving students' achievement and standards in Key Stages 3 and 4. National test results show considerable improvement in standards at Key Stage 3 in the core subjects. In 2007, for example, 82% of Year 9 students reached Level 5 or above in science, which is 12% more than in 2006. At Key Stage 4, the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C has risen from 44% in 2006 to 63% in 2007. The most recent data indicate that students are now making the progress expected between Key Stages 2

and 4. The standard of students' work is good. Written work is of a high quality and students respond well to questioning in class, demonstrating a good understanding, particularly in science.

The local authority and the school have worked very hard to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and good progress has been made. The local authority's advisers have worked with selected teachers to develop and enhance their skills, enabling them to share the good practice with colleagues. The system for lesson observations is comprehensive, providing sound evidence of continuous improvement. Teaching and learning are at least satisfactory and an increasing proportion is good or better. Students report that teaching is much better and continues to improve. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives and a wide range of activities to engage and challenge students. There is good consolidation of learning during and at the end of lessons. An increasing number of teachers are using assessment very effectively to promote learning. Students are being taught how to assess their work and identify ways to make it better. Policies for homework and assessment have been introduced and practice is more consistent. The quality of marking is better, and students report that work is marked regularly with clear guidance given on ways to improve. Students are set targets in each subject and these are monitored regularly. Subject leaders are able to use this information to focus additional support flexibly and responsively.

The school has made satisfactory progress in improving the provision, outcomes and influence of the specialist humanities provision. Teaching and learning are improving in humanities, and teachers are taking a lead in delivering some in-house training. GCSE results have improved in all three subjects, especially in geography where there has been a 20% increase in the proportion of high grades. GCE A level humanities results do not show a clear upward trend but the number of students is small. The school works with its partner primary schools in a number of ways, especially using drama. There are plans to work more closely with the two partner schools in the post-16 consortium. Specialist resources are shared with the community.

The school values highly the support from the local authority, especially the work that they are doing to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The school also appreciates the support from the Specialist School and Academies Trust as part of its achievement programme.

Yours sincerely

Jan Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector