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Mrs S Peckett
The Headteacher
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Bratton Fleming
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Dear Mrs Peckett

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 24 January 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass my thanks to your chair of governors, the local authority's representative, your subject leaders and the children with whom I talked during my visit.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection on 18 September 2006, the school was asked to: improve the quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum for the Reception children; improve the quality of marking so that pupils learn what is expected of them and understand what they need to do to improve; and, strengthen the capacity of subject leaders to check the quality of teaching and how well pupils are doing.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and raising the pupils' achievement.

The school has experienced a difficult time of transition in the period since the last inspection. A lack of continuity in leadership, following the previous headteacher's resignation in April 2007, hampered the progress staff were able to make on most of the issues for improvement. In November 2007, a substantive headteacher was appointed and, in the short time she has been in post, a collaborative ethos and a more urgent drive for improvement have been established. Consequently, the school has been able to work on the areas for improvement in a coherent and structured way.

Since the last inspection, the school has received ongoing advice from the local authority's early years adviser. The Reception teacher has worked extremely hard and readily taken on this advice. Over the last year, marked improvements have been made to the quality of both the indoor and outdoor learning environments. A much richer and more varied range of resources and learning opportunities are now on offer to the children, including a balance of child led and adult led activities. Teaching is now satisfactory and has a number of good features. The teacher's sound planning and classroom management are clearly based on the government's guidance for the Foundation Stage and this means that children are consistently able to explore each area of learning in practical ways. However, more could be done to extend children's thinking during their discussions with adults in class and by giving them more opportunities to participate in large group practical activities. Relationships between adults and children are warm and positive. This helps children explore the world more independently and with growing confidence, both individually and together.

The teaching team carefully assesses the learning children initiate themselves and their response to the teacher's introduction of new concepts and skills. In 2007, two thirds of children were working securely within the early learning goals for learners of their age, and a quarter was working above this level. This represents satisfactory progress, given the children's starting points. At present, the tracking and analysis of children's progress through the year is in its infancy. Consequently, some information about the progress learners make is not yet consistently informing the planning to ensure the closest possible match between each child's needs and their learning experiences.

The acting headteacher began the process of helping teachers improve their assessment of pupils' work, providing feedback to learners and setting targets as to how they might improve their work further. As a consequence, teachers now clarify with their class what they are going to learn each lesson, and some are also agreeing the criteria for successful learning with the class for pupils to use in judging their own work. However, the use of this practice varies, as does the marking of pupils' books and setting of targets. Most books are regularly checked and errors and misconceptions about learning are corrected. Although the school's reward system is used consistently, teachers do not always clarify for pupils their key learning strengths and what to do to improve their work, particularly in mathematics and science. An exception to this is the way in which writing is assessed. Pupils' writing is periodically assessed in detail, so that clear written feedback is given and personal targets are set with each pupil as to what and how to improve in their work.

At the time of the last inspection, subject leaders were being given insufficient time to develop an understanding of their role and to carry it out. In the short time she has been at the school, the headteacher has formulated a clear direction for the work of subject leaders and provided them with sufficient time to carry out their duties. Subject leaders are now more confident about their responsibilities and are being well supported as they work to make up the lost ground. In recent months, they have begun using techniques for evaluating standards in the subject and the progress pupils are making. They have talked with colleagues, talked with pupils and studied the available achievement data. In doing this, they have made accurate

judgements about the learners' achievement in their subjects. For example, teachers have correctly identified the need to focus on the needs of more able pupils in mathematics and science and that boys' writing is a relative weakness. However, because subject leaders have not yet observed lessons or analysed why these groups of learners sometimes underachieve, the school has not yet honed its strategies for ensuring that teaching in these subjects and the provision of additional support programmes are well tailored to the needs of all groups of pupils.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

David Townsend
Her Majesty's Inspector