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Mrs S Dunn  
The Headteacher  
Heathlands Primary School  
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BH11 8HB

Dear Mrs Dunn

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 7 November 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to your chair of governors and school improvement partner for giving up time to talk to me. I also appreciated the opportunity to talk to a group of pupils.

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 10 and 11 October 2006, the school was asked to: improve the curriculum to meet pupils' needs and promote literacy, numeracy and independence; improve teaching and learning; and, make better use of assessments to support pupils' learning.

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 in raising the pupils' achievement.

At the time of the last inspection, standards were well below average in Years 2 and 6. The 2007 results dipped and were exceptionally low at both key stages. The targets set by the school for these pupils were missed. Although the majority made accelerated progress during their final year, particularly in reading, many of them did not catch up sufficiently to reach the nationally expected level.

Over the last year, the headteacher has given a clear and determined lead in developing important aspects of the school's work. She has focused on the right areas but the improvements have not yet had time to raise pupils' achievement and standards. Pupils are beginning to make better progress but there is some way to go

before achievement is secure and consistent for all pupils. Fewer pupils are underachieving lower down the school but a significant proportion in Years 4 to 6 have a lot of ground to make up, particularly in mathematics and writing, if they are to reach the nationally expected levels by Year 6.

The school has improved the way pupils' progress is tracked and monitored, based on assessments. Teachers know which pupils have slipped behind and which need additional support or challenge. Pupils with learning difficulties are benefiting from more focused and tailored support to help them with specific difficulties. The headteacher is ensuring that suitably challenging targets are set for each pupil. These improvements mean pupils are now at much less risk of underachieving.

The school has made significant strides in improving the curriculum. Teachers plan in teams and this is bringing about greater consistency for pupils who are in the same year group but in different classes. The planning is more explicit about what pupils will learn from activities and the specific skills that they will develop, including literacy and numeracy. Good links occur between subjects. For example, pupils used their knowledge of division and multiplication to solve number problems related to a topic on Egypt. Speaking skills and general confidence are also being encouraged through drama and role play. Pupils recalled many lessons and activities that they had found interesting and enjoyable. These included the recent dance project, the various clubs, working with artists and sports coaches, and the range of activities on Friday afternoons. Pupils also enjoy using the new laptop computers.

Teaching is improving. The proportion of good lessons has increased and the inadequate teaching reduced. Many teachers use the new plans to provide lessons which are interesting for pupils and which promote learning, but this is not yet consistent in all classes. The headteacher has used the strengths that lie within the school well, and has provided opportunities for teachers to research new ideas and support one another. She has introduced targeted training and visits to other schools, to stimulate and inspire ideas. The local authority has also provided specific support. These initiatives have helped to bring about consistently good teaching in some classes. In these cases, pupils are interested in learning and actively involved and teaching assistants are clear about how they can help pupils' learning. However, teaching remains satisfactory overall because pockets of inadequate teaching remain where, typically, teachers talk for too much of the time, pupils are left sitting for too long, and the pace of learning slackens.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Dickinson  
Her Majesty's Inspector