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Mrs Sally Newman
The Headteacher
William Morris School
Bretch Hill
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Dear Mrs Newman

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you, your staff and the chair of governors gave when I inspected your school on 3 December 2007; for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Particular thanks are due to all the pupils for their warm and friendly welcome.

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 in October 2006, the school was asked to:

1. raise achievement and standards in English and mathematics, particularly in speaking and writing
2. improve the school's long term plans for improvement by focusing more on teaching and achievement, and evaluating outcomes more rigorously
3. improve the consistency of teaching.

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

The staff and governors have worked as an effective team to ensure all the issues have been addressed well. Improvements have been made throughout the school, building significantly on established strengths, as well as tackling the weaker areas identified in the last report. For example, the good provision in the Foundation Stage has been improved further, good standards of behaviour have been maintained and continue to improve, and the strong links with parents have been consolidated. Good use has been made of support and guidance from the local authority in making improvements.

Achievement has improved significantly in the last year. Standards rose at both key stages because pupils' progress is more rapid. The results of national assessments in 2007 show that the steady year-on-year improvement at Year 2 continued. Results improved dramatically for pupils in Year 6, and their overall achievement during Key Stage 2 was in the top 5% of schools nationally. Exceptional progress in science resulted in above-average standards in this subject. The school's detailed records show that pupils make good progress in English and mathematics at both key stages. Standards have risen in speaking, and pupils are much more confident and articulate in expressing their ideas. The school is right to identify this as a major factor in raising standards in science, and as having the potential to do the same in other subjects. Standards are much closer to the national average. However, they remain below average overall, particularly in writing, because of pupils' low starting points. Many pupils are still slow to develop the fluent, joined style that is needed in order to get their ideas onto paper confidently.

The improved performance of the pupils has been supported by good progress in leadership and management. The school's improvement planning focuses squarely on raising standards by improving teaching. The very detailed tracking of pupils' progress is central to this, and the school intervenes effectively to tackle any areas of weak performance. The impact of these interventions is evaluated rigorously, and is very positive. Similarly, the monitoring of teaching has resulted in clear feedback to staff, enabling them to improve their practice. This has underpinned the good progress made in addressing the third issue for improvement, and has established better consistency in teaching.

Teaching has improved since the last inspection, as is shown clearly in the school's records of monitoring, and the resultant better achievement by pupils. All the teaching observed by the inspector on this visit was of a good quality. In particular, exciting, practically-based experiences are much more frequent, and promote both achievement and pupils' enjoyment. Teachers now provide extensive, structured opportunities for speaking and listening which have the effect of raising standards across the curriculum, as well as in pupils' speaking skills. There are examples of outstanding practice in this aspect of teaching although, occasionally, opportunities are missed for pupils to discuss their work with each other. Pupils are very clear about their targets in literacy and numeracy. They know that these help them in their work, and give them something to aim for. As yet, their involvement in setting the targets is limited, an issue the school plans to address this year.

Thank you again for your help in organising this visit. I hope that you have found it helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely,

Steven Hill
Additional Inspector