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Mrs J Adams
The Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Adams

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 15 November 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and 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 17 and 18 May 2006, the school was asked to:

- improve self-evaluation to clearly identify the critical aspects that need improvement, and what actions will achieve this
- ensure the implementation of actions to bring about improvement
- use information about the pupils' progress consistently to plan lessons in order to fully challenge every learner.

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 as identified in the previous inspection.

The school has undertaken a rigorous self-evaluation to identify the critical aspects that it needs to improve. One of the areas, for example, has been to conduct a thorough analysis of monitoring and evaluation of the impact of its policies and strategies on teaching and learning. As a consequence, the school has found that not all staff consistently set out clear objectives for their lessons and that marking in books does not always tell the pupils how to improve their work. This is now firmly included in the school improvement plan to ensure the implementation of these actions aimed at bringing about the required improvements. The school has also undertaken a monitoring and evaluation exercise on the systems that it has developed over the last year for assessing pupils work. As a consequence, these have been fundamentally changed. Pupils' work is regularly assessed and progress is reviewed against the targets set for pupils. Teachers and subject leaders analyse

areas of weakness for individual pupils and groups. This information is increasingly used to modify lesson planning and teaching strategies to support the specific needs of pupils. Teachers are aware of the need to focus on areas where pupils are less confident or where their understanding is weakest. However, this is not yet consistent across the school. As a result of these changes, pupils make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2 and are beginning to make good progress in Years 7 and 8.

The frequency and rigour of monitoring have improved and this has helped to keep a focus on the need to raise standards. The senior team makes good use of tracking information to ensure pupils are learning as much as expected in relation to their targets. Any decrease in achievement is identified and the reasons for this discussed. This is beginning to lead to further developments in the intervention strategies to help improve pupils' progress. The school improvement plan and self-evaluation reflect improved analysis and identification of priority areas for development. However, success criteria are not always sufficiently focused on measuring the outcomes of the actions on pupils' achievement. Also, perceptions of what constitutes good progress are not yet consistent across the school.

During the joint observation of lessons, some variations in pace, engagement, independent learning, and marking style were noted. In the best lessons questioning was insightful and well directed as the teacher sought to develop the accurate use of subject specific vocabulary in order to secure a high level of response. In these lessons pupils learned to analyse text in detail.

The school has worked hard to improve the way some classes are organised and pupils are set according to their ability. Similarly, targets are chosen carefully with the pupils, particularly in English and mathematics. Older pupils talk confidently about these and can explain the way that teachers mark their work. For the oldest pupils these targets are helping them to focus on what they need to do to improve. Some of the younger pupils are also aware of targets, but are not always clear on what they have to do to achieve them.

The senior leadership team has had to tackle considerable staffing problems since the last inspection, particularly in mathematics where pupils' achievement has been adversely affected. The school is working hard to address this. The middle leaders are becoming more involved in whole school development. They have recently begun to draw up specific year group and subject action plans which highlight the actions to improve standards and achievement. Governors receive regular updates on the school's progress which is helping them to hold the school to account better and redress the weakness found during the previous inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Rashida Sharif
Her Majesty's Inspector