

29 February 2008

Mr D Rogers  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Rogers

### Ofsted monitoring of schools with a Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 28 February 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information you provided before and during my visit. I am grateful to the chair of governors and school improvement adviser for our discussions, to the pupils who kindly shared their lunchtime with me to talk about their school, and the many others who shared their work with me in the six classrooms I visited.

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 25–26 June 2007, the school was asked to:

- Raise the achievements of pupils, particularly in writing in Years 3 and 4.
- Remove inconsistencies in teaching and ensure that best classroom practice is shared effectively to increase the proportion of lessons in which teaching and pupils' progress is good or better.
- Ensure that monitoring, evaluation and assessment practice is sufficiently systematic and rigorous to promote the necessary improvement in the quality of provision, and increases pupils' awareness of how well they are progressing relative to their targets, and precisely what they have to do to progress further.

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 pupils' achievement.

National tests taken by Year 6 pupils in 2007 confirmed that standards were broadly average in English, mathematics and science. However, that year group had made poor progress in mathematics and science, given their average starting points. Since then, progress has improved. The school's tracking shows that more pupils are

currently making the progress needed to reach the school's challenging end-of-year targets than was the case last year. Teachers' assessments indicate broadly satisfactory progress in writing by pupils in Years 3 and 4. The rate of progress is now closer to that seen in Years 5 and 6, though higher-attaining pupils have not reached expected levels in Year 4. There is evidence, at least in Year 5, that pupils whose standards in writing were too low in the past have caught up well. The current Year 6 started the year from a stronger position than the previous cohort and in recent practice tests they showed they are on track to meet expectations in English and mathematics. In mathematics fewer pupils have got stuck at Level 3 than last year. In English, half the year group exceeded the national expectation to reach Level 5 in the practice test. A risk the school has identified is that boys' writing remains weaker than girls', so it has arranged suitable interventions to improve this.

Pupils' improved progress is a result of both better use of more accurate assessment information to focus teaching, and teaching which is becoming increasingly consistent and effective. For example, the diagnosis of underachievement in number work and mental and oral mathematics has led to a concerted whole-school drive in these areas which has given pupils more confidence. A third part-time teacher for Year 6 means that pupils are taught in smaller groups for English and mathematics, and a teaching assistant has been added. Much has been done to remove the inconsistencies in teaching noted in the previous inspection. For example, teachers are applying the new learning and teaching policy they were involved in writing. They are using key elements of recent professional development with increasing expertise. Teachers have been held to account for their pupils' progress and weaker teaching has been challenged, supported and, where necessary, dealt with.

The school has increased the proportion of lessons in which teaching and pupils' progress is good or better, but not yet far enough for securely good progress in each year group. Strengths seen in classrooms include the consistent use of learning objectives and outcomes tailored to the needs of different groups; practical approaches to learning which give pupils a strong sense of purpose; and time for pupils to practise skills. Features seen in the best lessons but not successfully transferred to all include simple, lucid explanations of success criteria and the good management of discussion which leads pupils to rehearse ideas, ask their questions, speculate, and use the language of the subject. Best classroom practice has begun to be shared effectively, leading to consistency in important aspects of teaching. The subject leaders for English and mathematics model good practice and have monitored lessons and pupils' work, led professional development meetings, and undertaken joint planning and teaching. However, too few opportunities have been found for colleagues to observe the good practice in the school. As a result, the finer points which make teaching good have not been embedded everywhere.

Monitoring, evaluation and assessment practice is now sufficiently systematic and rigorous to promote improvement. A tracking system is in use and data accurately match the quality of work seen. Teachers' plans show understanding of what pupils can already do and need to do next, and how to help them. There has been limited progress towards using joint assessment across the transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 to make sure Year 3 pupils get off to a flying start. Pupils are aware of how well they are progressing relative to their targets, especially in regard to writing.

Marking is getting better at showing them precisely what they have to do to progress further.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have tackled the areas for improvement whole-heartedly: monitoring has been regular and linked to professional development. Staff show strong commitment to fulfilling the improvement plan and the governors have been involved in monitoring improvement. However, the progress reviews prepared by leaders at all levels make limited use of evidence of the impact of their work on the progress made by pupils. The support and challenge provided by the local authority has been significantly helpful to the school in planning and reviewing improvement. Consultant support and the learning partnership with another school has been instrumental, for example in the development of subject leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Bowles  
Her Majesty's Inspector