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Mr Keith Simmons
The Headteacher
Linden Grove Primary School
Stanhope Road
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Dear Mr Simmons

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 30 June 2008, 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 the staff and pupils who met with me and to your chair of governors and local authority School Improvement Partner.

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 7 and 8 November 2007, the school was asked to:

- build on improvements to teaching and learning so that all pupils make up lost ground and achieve as well as they should
- develop the capacity to improve by establishing consistent, high quality middle leadership and management.

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.

The school now has a substantive headteacher, who took up his post in January 2008. There is currently an acting deputy headteacher and a newly appointed deputy headteacher joins the school this coming September. With the exception of two temporary appointments, there is a stable complement of staff for the next school year. One assistant headteacher is on an agreed long-term leave of absence. The chair of governors very recently took up this position.

The headteacher has swiftly gained a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. He has monitored lessons extensively over the last six months and this information has enabled him to support and intervene where necessary. He has

adjusted his priorities to respond to the school's most immediate needs, but also maintains a longer-term vision and is working to provide provision that captures pupils' interest and imagination.

Lessons have a clear purpose and direction which pupils know and understand. Pupils refer to 'learning objectives' and 'success criteria' and can explain the difference. They also appreciate the impact of small improvements, such as those to every day resources like calculators and pencils, because they now have equipment that is always to hand. Indeed, pupils' positive attitudes to their work provide a fertile ground for learning. A change of seating arrangements, for example, is welcomed as a spur to get on with their work rather than a temptation to chat with friends. Opportunities to participate in drama or to discuss a shared task provide excitement and motivation, and also give pupils' speaking skills a much needed boost. Expectations of presentation and handwriting are now higher and pupils benefit from some feedback on their work, although mostly in English. While some pupils know their learning targets, others do not.

Improvements to teaching are gradually gaining greater consistency and, therefore, creating firm foundations for increasing rates of learning beyond their present pace. However, while many pupils are making satisfactory, and sometimes better, progress, it still remains too patchy. As a result, achievement is not yet robust enough to lift attainment. Standards are still low in the current Year 6 and are below average at Year 2. The school is very aware of the need to secure more swift and consistent progress for pupils to catch up. Further work on the accuracy of assessment and greater analysis of data mean that the school now has a bank of reliable information for setting challenging targets and evaluating future achievement. This information has yet to be discussed in detail with class teachers, and with those responsible for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, in order to fine tune provision to pupils' particular needs. Sometimes, for example, lower attaining pupils are not given enough practical experience to consolidate their understanding, whilst others are not always fully prepared in advance of demanding tasks so that they get the most from their subsequent activities.

The development of middle management has moved on at a good pace. These leaders are eager to expand their role and have grown in confidence and stature as their responsibilities have increased and developed. Such is the level of their participation in the school's improvement that they now attend the local authority's monthly review of the school's progress. At these meetings, they are as robustly held to account about their work as are senior leaders. Their leadership of the new curriculum teams has increased communication among staff so that good practice is shared and developed more widely. Such work is now extending successful features of Foundation Stage provision, such as opportunities for independent learning and a close focus on early literacy skills, into Year 1, and has increased liaison between the speech and language unit and provision for pupils with learning difficulties in the main school. Middle managers have taken a key role in creating greater consistency in assessment practices and contributed to the analysis of information about progress. They have now started to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of new developments. These checks have already provided some useful feedback about the success of initiatives and where others have been less effective, thus enabling staff

to change provision for next year. Nevertheless, this evaluative aspect of middle managers' work is at an early stage.

The local authority continues to work closely with the school and has suitably amended its statement of action to reflect the school's present circumstances. The School Improvement Partner offers rigorous debate, support and challenge. Shared lesson observations and help with assessment have valuably supported development in these areas. Support for the chair of governors has enabled her to make preparations for extending governors' monitoring activities. Governors new to the school bring important experience and expertise to increase the governing body's effectiveness as a critical friend.

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

Yours sincerely

Patricia Davies
Additional Inspector