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Ms Lisa Dunning
Headteacher
Langstone Junior School
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Dear Ms Dunning

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help of you and your staff when I inspected your school, 2 February, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, staff and the governor who met with me.

After the last inspection, 26–27 March 2008, the school continued to be led by the deputy headteacher until the formal resignation of the previous headteacher and the appointment of her replacement for the start of this academic year.

As a result of the inspection the school was asked to: improve the rate of pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science; increase the proportion of good teaching and develop the role and impact of subject and team leaders and of the governing body.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made:

- inadequate progress in making improvements
- inadequate progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Since the last inspection the pupils' achievement has declined overall. Sharp falls in progress in English, mathematics and science in the year after the inspection led to low results for Year 6 pupils in national assessment tests. Progress began to improve the following year and attainment rose, but achievement remained below that expected. Current pupils are still not making enough progress in lessons to reach the levels they should by the time they leave. Progress in different year groups is inconsistent; it is best in Year 6 but too little is achieved in earlier years. There are



marked weaknesses in the pupils' writing skills, including basic spelling and grammar. Their attainment in mathematics is below average because they do not build their knowledge and understanding in a secure sequence.

After the inspection the acting headteacher, supported by the assistant headteacher, worked hard to build morale and stabilise staffing following a period of high turnover. Their success led to some improvement in teaching but not on the scale necessary to ensure pupils made secure progress in learning. The new headteacher has set about increasing the pace of change but much remains to be done. More rigour in assessing the pupils' attainment and tracking their progress is beginning to identify those underachieving. However, too many lessons contain significant weaknesses: activities are insufficiently varied to meet the pupils' differing needs; the purpose and features of successful learning are not always made clear to the pupils; teachers' and teaching assistants' subject knowledge is not always confident enough to help them explain key concepts and teachers do not always check progress within lessons in order to intervene if it is too slow. Marking is regular and some gives useful guidance for improvement, but the pupils are not routinely expected to respond to the advice they are given and its impact is reduced.

Subject and team leaders have begun to work more purposefully but have yet to make a significant impact on pupils' achievement. Their responsibilities have been made more explicit and they are beginning to undertake a wider range of monitoring activities. Nevertheless, their grasp of strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility and their capacity to bring about change is underdeveloped. The governing body has provided good support to the school during a difficult period of transition in senior leadership. The provision of information to the governors has improved because of better relationships with senior leaders, including the new headteacher. Notably, more information is being provided to them about the pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. However, governors are not making best use of this information to monitor the school's work and independently challenge leaders.

The school's limited success in improving the quality of provision and the pupils' achievement is reflected in its limited capacity for sustained improvement. However, there are signs of better foundations being built for the future. The contribution of the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher prevented a comprehensive decline in the personal outcomes for the pupils so that their behaviour and attitudes remain good. The arrival of the new headteacher has given the school a greater sense of purpose and a belief that it can move on, although she has had little time to make an impact. She has a clear understanding of what needs to be done and is working well with her colleagues to build a shared vision. Ineffective teaching is beginning to be tackled through more effective monitoring. Challenging targets for the pupils' achievement have been set and strategic plans are being drawn up to achieve them. Senior leadership is being remodelled to ensure better value for money and that all those in senior positions make more impact across the school. In all these endeavours there is a considerable way to go to secure a good pace of change.



External support from the local authority has had an inadequate impact on the pupils' achievement overall. The local authority recognises this and monitoring and support have improved since the appointment of the new headteacher. There are good plans for local authority staff to work alongside those in school in building internal capacity for improvement. Communication with the headteacher is good in coordinating the work of local authority personnel.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long
Her Majesty's Inspector

