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Miss J Oliver  
The Headteacher  
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Dear Miss Oliver

#### Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 25 February 2010, for the time you gave to our discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I would like to thank all those I spoke to including staff, pupils, the chair of governors and representatives of the local authority.

Since the last inspection, staffing has remained stable, although some classes are taught by long-term supply teachers. At the last inspection, the school had had a recent influx of pupils from Eastern European backgrounds. This has been sustained. Most other pupils are White British.

As a result of the inspection on March 2008, the school was asked to:

- ensure that progress is consistently good or better in order to raise standards in English, mathematics and science
- make systematic checks on the quality of teaching to identify and extend effective practice into all lessons
- promote the educational importance of frequent attendance with parents to ensure the good attendance of those pupils who do not come to school often enough.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The school has moved forward well since the inspection, with the recommendations made by Ofsted in 2008 being used to good effect. It is well placed to continue its



journey of improvement. Much of this success is due to the relentless drive, rigour and vision shown by the headteacher, very well supported by her dynamic senior team and a committed, knowledgeable, governing body. Local authority officers, who support the school well, say they wish they could 'bottle' the headteacher's leadership to share with others – and it is easy to see why. She has promoted a clear and very coherent vision, while building up the involvement and skills of others. This leads to consistency and improvements in practice across the school. Staff work well together. They experience good professional development and training opportunities and their professional discussions are of increasingly high quality. Middle leaders promote each subject well, ensuring a broad and challenging experience for each pupil.

The school's self-evaluation is clearly written and accurate, providing a robust basis for future planning. No excuses are allowed for any weaker provision or low outcomes for pupils. All school plans are well-constructed working documents which lead to the improvements being made. However, a lack of clear success criteria in some plans means the school cannot easily check its progress in certain key areas.

Reliable data about pupils' attainment are now very well tracked and analysed by the deputy headteacher. This ensures accountability for staff and leads to higher expectations. Pupils' learning and progress are improving steadily. Standards at the end of Year 6 are becoming closer to national averages in English, mathematics and science, although without a 'step change' in headline figures. The school does not yet consistently analyse attainment in other subjects.

The regular recruitment of children from Eastern Europe, who often speak very little English and have little prior schooling, makes reaching national average standards harder. Such pupils are, nevertheless, cared for, welcomed and supported well. Specialist language teaching for them is effective, as is the wider support provided for them and their families. Along with their classmates, whose needs are also appropriately met, they make at least satisfactory, and often better, progress. Good interventions, well organised by the assistant headteacher, often led by well-trained teaching assistants, help pupils from any backgrounds who may be making too little progress. The school contributes significantly to the cohesiveness of its local community and is explicit in planning for this. Pupils are very supportive of each other.

The school has improved considerably the way it monitors the quality of teaching and learning. All classes and teachers are observed regularly on an unannounced basis. Observation notes are clearly recorded with helpful feedback given to staff about what is going well and what can still be improved. These points are then checked up at the next observation. Through this process, and by dealing robustly with some underperformance, the school has eliminated inadequate teaching and many lessons are good or better. This was seen in lessons briefly observed by HMI. Pupils were keen to learn and well engaged in interesting activities, well related to appropriate whole-class learning objectives. Relationships were consistently positive



with teachers and teaching assistants questioning pupils and supporting their learning well. This led to pupils' attitudes and behaviour being consistently good. However, although work was often adapted to meet different needs amongst the pupils, this was not closely or explicitly aligned with the better assessment data the school now has. It did not, therefore, ensure that the next steps of learning needed by each pupil were precisely addressed. Senior staff rightly see that improving this aspect is important in the drive to reach higher standards.

Attendance shows improvement. The school has met its most recent challenging target, which reflects its context. However, overall absence rates remain above the national average and are higher amongst Eastern European pupils than the others. The school works hard to improve attendance through a range of appropriate and rigorously followed strategies, including positive and well-managed relationships with parents, involving several staff.

Pupils speak very highly of the school. They appreciate all the support provided by adults, though some also feel that pupils can be told off too harshly on occasions. They usually know their personal academic targets, which are challenging. They appreciate the thorough marking of their work which helps them to improve it. They also like the physical environment of the school, with good, stimulating displays in public areas and working walls in classrooms which help their thinking.

The school also uses hands-on learning outside the classroom well, for example pupils measure playground markings in mathematics investigations. They learn much from visits out, including a recent whole-school visit to a pantomime. There is a good range of inclusive clubs. A recent exciting whole-school science challenge led to some high order thinking by many pupils. As one pupil said, 'We can get involved in learning, it's not just writing.' Rightly, the pupils can see that this broad curriculum is contributing much to their improved learning.

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

Robin Hammerton  
Her Majesty's Inspector

