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Mr M Stevens
The Headteacher
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Hume Street
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Dear Mr Stevens

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 8 October 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass my thanks on to the chair and vice chair of governors for their time too.

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 18 and 19 September 2007, the school was asked to:

- improve the quality of provision in the Foundation Stage, particularly expectations of what children can achieve and the match of teaching to children's needs
- raise standards in Years 1 to 6 so that more pupils reach the levels expected for their ages, particularly in writing
- improve teaching in Years 1 to 6, in particular, ensure that all lessons have a good pace and that teachers have high expectations of pupils
- make sure that the marking provides all pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work and reach their targets.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the areas for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Satisfactory progress is being made to improving the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Effective advice provided by a local authority consultant has been greatly welcomed by staff who are now paying closer attention to children's needs and meeting them through a more stimulating learning environment and activities. In 2008, from their lower starting points on entry,

children made satisfactory progress overall. This is because staff have raised their expectations of what the children can achieve. Their sharp observations of what children accomplish on a daily basis are increasingly being recorded in detail so that suitable adjustments to teaching are made. The system for recording was introduced at the start of the autumn term 2008 and it is being implemented conscientiously. It is too early to evaluate its impact but it is enabling the EYFS leader to keep a close eye on how well teaching is contributing to children's achievement. Staff make every effort to extend language and learning by talking to the children and providing structured opportunities, both indoors and outdoors, to challenge them. The EYFS leader has accurately identified the need to develop children's communication, language and mathematical skills further so that many more are on course to meet the early learning goals, set for them nationally, by the beginning of Year 1.

The school continues to set challenging targets and teachers' use of the pupil tracking system is improving. Senior leaders are able to identify which pupils are underperforming because of the half-termly checks on pupils' progress. Suitable interventions are helping to raise standards in Year 1 to Year 6. The 2008 results at the end of Key Stage 1 show that the majority of pupils reached the levels expected for their age. A number attained at a higher level, particularly in writing and mathematics. This is a clear improvement from the previous year. Although national test results at the end of Key Stage 2 have yet to be validated, the school's assessment information shows that standards continue to be below expectations. This reflects the legacy of underachievement. Support from local authority consultants is being used well to tackle this weakness, but this has yet to fully impact on raising standards overall by the end of Year 6.

The school has a strong focus on improving aspects of teaching. Monitoring of teaching is regular. Senior leaders' observations and evaluation of lessons accurately identify strengths and areas for improvement. Evaluation indicates that pace in lessons is good overall and this was supported by my own observations. Detailed records are made of each observation and the teachers receive pertinent points for development. Close tracking of pupils' progress by senior and middle leaders is helping to raise teachers' expectations and the impact teachers can make on pupils' learning. Strong improvement in the quality of writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 demonstrates a positive impact. Much marking of pupils' work is good where it provides clear guidance on how it can be improved and where it is linked to clearly identified targets. Most pupils know their targets and evaluate their progress through a 'traffic light' system. However, some inconsistencies persist and comments for improvement are not always followed up. Raising standards in Key Stage 2 remains a priority.

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

Yours sincerely
Dilip Kadodwala
Her Majesty's Inspector