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10 March 2011

Mr K Simpson  
Headteacher  
Ash Grove Primary and Nursery School  
Belgrave Road  
Macclesfield  
Cheshire  
SK11 7TF

Dear Mr Simpson,

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Ash Grove Primary and Nursery School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 9 March 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also pass my thanks on to the Chair of the Governing Body.

I noted that in September 2010 two new teachers joined the school, one of them to lead work in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and a member of the existing staff took on the role of special educational needs coordinator. Also several teachers, who were seconded to the school at the time of the previous inspection, are now permanent members of staff.

As a result of the inspection on 1 and 2 December 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter. 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.

Attainment in English and mathematics improved greatly in 2010. Although the Year 6 pupils' results in the national tests were below average, they were much better than in recent years at Ash Grove. The current Year 6 pupils are expected to do better than last year's cohort, with more pupils predicted to reach a level that is higher than average for their age. At Key Stage 1, the improvement in attainment seen in 2009 has continued, so last year the Year 2 pupils reached standards not far below the national average. Pupils are now making better progress in their learning, especially so in Key Stage 1. Nonetheless, some pupils in Key Stage 2 have gaps in knowledge and understanding which show there is more to do to fully overcome the legacy of past underachievement. The school has focused on raising pupils' achievement in the key skills of literacy and numeracy. Attainment in science has not improved so rapidly.

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Pupils enjoy lessons and try hard. They are making good progress in developing the attributes and skills they need to do well, such as confidence to tackle challenging work and persistence to solve problems. Attendance remains below average compared with similar schools, because of a few poor attenders, but the figures so far this year are an improvement on the same period last year.

Two main factors account for pupils' improved achievement: better teaching and better use of data drawn from close tracking of pupils' progress. All the teaching observed was of at least a good quality and outstanding teaching was seen at the top of the school. Lessons were invariably orderly and purposeful and often active, with clear objectives for pupils' learning. Work was generally pitched to challenge pupils and matched well to their varied learning needs. At times, however, the brighter pupils could have pushed on more rapidly. Robust assessment is used well to monitor the effectiveness of the school's work, to hold teachers responsible for pupils' rates of progress and to determine which pupils need extra help. Leadership of English and mathematics has played an important part in raising attainment. The leadership of other subjects, though satisfactory, is less well developed. Links between subjects have developed and pupils have some good opportunities to use key skills, particularly literacy, across subjects.

Much has been done to strengthen the school's promotion of community cohesion, to broaden pupils' horizons and to develop their understanding of diversity. Links with the community locally, further afield in Britain and globally are developing well, enhanced by a rich programme of educational visits and visitors.

The provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to learn out of doors has been improved and plans are well in hand for further development.

The school has built successfully on the early improvements seen at the previous inspection. It has proved its capacity to improve the quality of its provision and the outcomes for pupils academically and in their personal development. The previous inspection recognised the ability and vision of senior staff and the governing body and the high morale of the cohesive staff team. These remain strong and enthusiasm for continuing development is palpable. The school is in a strong position to sustain improvement. The local authority has played its part in the drive for improvement. Its staff have supported the school and monitored its progress regularly.

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

Yours sincerely

Pat Kime  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**



## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2009**

- Raise pupils' attainment, learning and progress in English, mathematics and science by:
  - providing pupils with more opportunities to apply literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across all subjects of the curriculum
  - ensure consistent use of assessment and tracking systems so that activities in lessons are always matched closely to pupils' learning needs.
- Develop outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage in order to extend children's physical development and opportunities to investigate and explore.
- Develop the leadership skills of subject leaders so that they have a greater impact upon pupils' learning and progress.
- Help pupils to develop a wider understanding of communities beyond their own local and school community.