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Mr P Hunkin
The Headteacher
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Dear Mr Hunkin

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Crowan Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 1 December 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Kindly pass on my thanks to everyone who helped me during the day, including the pupils, staff, members of the governing body and the School Improvement Partner.

There have been several changes at the school since the previous inspection. In April 2010, a part-time teacher took maternity leave and returned in February 2011. In March 2011, new subject leaders for numeracy and science were appointed internally. The Early Years Foundation Stage teacher was absent for an extended period during the summer term 2011. Two members of the governing body have left and been replaced.

As a result of the inspection on 18 and 19 May 2010, 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 satisfactory progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Attainment is rising steadily in both key stages, but is higher in reading and mathematics than in writing. In 2011, the attainment of pupils in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 rose, but remained broadly in line with the



average. Increasing proportions of pupils now reach the expected levels because there is more good teaching and rates of progress are improving. Progress is also stronger in reading and mathematics than in writing. The school's predictions for pupils in the current Year 2 and Year 6 confirm these improvements are being sustained.

Pupils report they increasingly enjoy mathematics because they are more active in lessons and are encouraged to give reasons for their answers. Classroom role play areas provide pupils with practical opportunities to apply their mathematical skills. A noticeable example was observed during a lesson on fractions in Key Stage 2. In this lesson, pupils worked purposefully to reduce the prices of stock in their beach store. They were highly engaged in their learning and had a clear strategy for solving the problems set. Daily practice has helped pupils become more proficient in using mental calculation methods. Occasionally, these initial activities take too long so pupils do not have enough time to apply their skills in the main part of the lesson. At other times, progress slows because teachers do not use every opportunity to challenge individuals, particularly the more able.

Teachers' comments in books provide informative feedback through a two ticks and a wish system that is understood widely by pupils. Pupils have a greater involvement in evaluating their work through the use of detailed 'marking ladders', but this is more evident in literacy than mathematics. Systems for setting individual learning targets are also now well established. Pupils of all abilities know their targets that are displayed prominently on desks and are easily accessible during the lesson. Targets are challenging, such as those for lower ability pupils that are based on the levels expected for their age. In the sample of lessons seen, pupils made frequent use of the key vocabulary and working examples on display to support them in their learning.

There are several strong features of the improving quality of teaching in both key stages. For example, teachers use their confident knowledge of subjects to demonstrate key skills and challenge pupils to give reasons for their answers. The whole-school focus on story telling has made a significant contribution to improvements in writing. Greater use is made of assessment information to ensure tasks are carefully matched to pupils' needs and abilities. A notable example was observed during a literacy lesson in Key Stage 1. In this lesson, the class teacher questioned pupils incisively and skilfully modelled the use of connectives in sentences. As a result, pupils demonstrated high levels of independence when composing and evaluating their own sentences against detailed criteria.

The restructuring of classes has improved the provision for pupils in Year 1, but improvements to the quality of provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have been limited. The classroom and outdoor environment have been enhanced by designated areas and new resources such as balance bicycles that promote children's physical development. However, the outdoor area was not fully utilised during the inspection. Lesson plans are not focused sufficiently on



developing children's levels of independence. Consequently, adults prompt and assist children too readily which hinders their ability to learn things for themselves. At times, assessment opportunities are missed because adults do not have recording materials near at hand. Assessments and observations are closely linked to all areas of learning. Nevertheless, learning profiles lack evidence from child-initiated activities and contain few contributions from the children or other adults.

Members of staff spoken to during the inspection praised the quality of support they had received. The local authority's continued support through the 'Improving Schools' programme has brought several benefits. The implementation of increasingly robust systems has improved the way leaders plan, monitor and evaluate the school's work. Middle leaders are playing a greater role in leading improvements and monitoring rigorously the difference that actions have made. The quality of teaching has been improved through regular training and individual mentoring from consultants. Consequently, the school is becoming more self-reliant when securing its own improvement and in developing its capacity to improve.

The governing body has a greater understanding of its role as a result of support from the School Improvement Partner. Members have reviewed their effectiveness and play an increasingly active part in monitoring the school's work. Visits are more closely linked to improvement priorities such as those to evaluate how the new mathematics scheme and 'working walls' were supporting pupils' learning in lessons. Despite leaders' better capacity to improve, the initiatives are not sufficiently established in the Early Years Foundation Stage to secure good teaching and learning.

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

Ian Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010

- Over the course of the next year raise pupils' achievements, especially in mathematical skills, by:
 - ensuring that pupils, particularly those of lower and average ability, make closer reference to their targets
 - involving pupils more effectively in self-evaluation, so that they develop greater proficiency in using and applying basic number facts and in designing their own strategies to solve problems.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching and learning across the school over the next two terms, especially in Reception and Year 1, by providing more opportunities for pupils to choose and follow their own learning activities and so develop their independence as learners and accelerate progress.