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Mrs Ann Montgomery  
Headteacher  
Castleton CofE Primary School  
Back Street  
Castleton  
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Dear Mrs Montgomery

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Castleton CofE Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 14 December 2011. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils and members of the governing body who I met with during the inspection.

There have been no contextual changes since the last inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 13 July 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 good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

National unvalidated assessment data show that, in 2011, the attainment of pupils completing Year 6 was much higher than in previous years and was above average in English and mathematics. This is the result of accelerated progress since the previous inspection. The school's own assessment information shows that, across the school, the large majority of pupils are now making good progress. At the last inspection, it was reported that the boys' attainment in writing and mathematics was generally lower than the girls. Assessment information and pupils' work shows that this is no longer the case.

This improvement in achievement is a result of a greater consistency in the quality of teaching. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils. Pupils' behaviour and engagement with their work are strong features that make an important contribution to learning. For example, pupils in a Year 5 and 6 English lesson worked extremely well in small groups devising a piece of drama to advertise products. The teacher

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used this technique very well to prepare pupils for developing their persuasive writing. Pupils then reported how much they enjoyed being able to use their own ideas when they were writing. Teachers use assessment information effectively to plan work that meets the needs of the large majority of pupils. However, expectations for the most able pupils are not as high as they could be. Teachers ensure that there is a brisk pace to lessons. There is now a better balance between the time pupils have to work on individual tasks and the time teachers spend talking. During the introductory parts to lessons, teachers do not vary their questions sufficiently to meet the needs of all the different ages and abilities in each class. Pupils refer to their targets regularly when writing or in mathematics lessons to ensure they are improving their work. When marking, teachers offer praise and advice but often miss the opportunity to comment on how successful pupils are in meeting their targets.

The school has enriched the curriculum. A regular programme of themed weeks effectively addresses the need to link subjects purposefully to give meaning to pupils. It also ensures that there are regular opportunities for pupils to learn about other faiths and cultures globally and nationally. English and mathematics lessons are interesting and stimulating. For example, in a Year 3 and 4 lesson, the teacher had arranged some stimulating practical activities for pupils to gain an understanding of what it would be like to be at the North Pole. This prepared them well for writing an imaginary diary of their time in the Arctic. The headteacher has accurately identified that the next step is to establish more systematic links between the skills taught in English lessons and work in other subjects.

The physical environment of the school is a barrier for teachers when trying to ensure that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have access to activities outside and also child-initiated activities. Nevertheless, the school is successfully overcoming this challenge. Since the previous inspection, an area has been designed so that children can choose their own activities. The class teacher and teaching assistant ensure that, every day, children spend time outside. For example, children thoroughly enjoyed painting a chimney for Santa Claus outside. They demonstrated developing cooperation and independence skills. The school fully exploits the local village and surrounding countryside very effectively so that, at least once a week, children are exposed to a rich variety of opportunities for learning.

The headteacher has established procedures to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. This has resulted in the strengthening of teaching, improvements to the curriculum and the rise in attainment. These procedures are underpinned by the school action plan. This is a useful document that sensibly has a short list of priorities and actions that are designed to make the biggest improvements to the pupils' education. The headteacher has been aided by an advanced skills teacher employed by the local authority who has made an effective contribution to the improved quality of teaching. The governing body is much better

equipped than at the time of the last inspection to hold the school to account for its strategic development. There are regular visits by governors to examine aspects of the school's work, and they have benefited from local authority training courses, that result in a governing body that has a good knowledge and insight into the work of the school.

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

Tim Bristow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Raise attainment in writing and mathematics, particularly of boys by ensuring that:
  - effective use is made of assessment information to plan learning activities that are appropriately challenging for pupils of all ages and abilities
  - pupils are actively engaged in learning from the start of lessons and that lessons proceed at a good pace
  - in the marking of pupils' work, they are given consistent guidance on the level of the work and what they must do in order to improve.
  
- Develop a more creative curriculum that:
  - enables pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding through a variety of topics and themes
  - provides pupils with more opportunities to develop their understanding of the diversity of faiths and cultures within the United Kingdom and throughout the world.
  
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - the monitoring of teaching and learning focuses more systematically on the progress pupils are making and the impact of action to raise standards
  - governors are more directly involved in monitoring and evaluating school provision and performance.
  
- Improve the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
  - providing more opportunities for child-initiated learning activities
  - developing the outdoor learning environment.