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Mrs V Coles
Headteacher
Halcon Community Primary School
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Dear Mrs Coles

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Halcon Community Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 1 February 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. I would especially like to thank staff and pupils, the four members of the governing body, including the Chair, the Local Leader of Education and the local authority officer who gave their time at short notice to meet with me.

Since the previous inspection in May 2011, one additional teacher was appointed in September 2011, in order to retain reduced class sizes. The special educational needs coordinator has increased her hours of work and is now employed full time. There has been some staff turbulence. One teacher left the school in November 2011. A long-term supply teacher was in post temporarily from November until the end of December 2011. Since January 2012, a teacher has been employed to teach in Year 3. Sickness absence has resulted in some inconsistencies in provision. There are three new members of the governing body. The school has also experienced significant structural issues with regard to its buildings. Substantial works to secure safe conditions for learning have taken place.

As a result of the inspection on 24–25 May 2011, 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 is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Attainment remains low in all year groups. However, pupils' progress is gradually improving. In national tests for Year 6 pupils in 2011, attainment was still below the

national average for writing. However, reading was broadly in line with the national average. Results in English and mathematics were the highest for five years. Systems for tracking pupils' attainment and progress have considerably improved. This information shows that from low starting points, pupils are making better progress. The school's current data on pupils' progress in all year groups show signs of improvement, although accelerated progress is required for pupils to achieve the targets the school has set for each year group.

Improving the quality of provision has been a high priority and leaders are working with the local authority and partner schools to improve practice. Staff have learned much from the consultant support in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT). The steps taken to improve teaching have made a positive impact on some teachers' work and new appointments have boosted the quality of teaching overall. Nevertheless, there is not enough good or better teaching and too much is satisfactory. Assessment information is used more effectively to plan lessons. However, assessment in ICT is yet to be implemented. Teachers' planning is generally well organised, with clear learning objectives linked to prior learning. However, some lesson planning does not use precise information about gaps in pupils' prior learning to devise appropriate activities. At times, work is either too difficult for some pupils or insufficiently challenging for more-able pupils because teachers do not always use detailed information about pupils' misconceptions and previous learning.

In some lessons, speaking skills were developed well through open, skilful questioning. As a result, pupils were involved in speaking activities in pairs, small groups and as a class, often building successfully on each other's ideas. Some teachers use assessment techniques effectively to assess how well pupils were learning in the lesson, and adjusted tasks accordingly. These features are not consistently evident in all classes and all lessons. The quality of marking is improving, but remains inconsistent, particularly in mathematics. Some teachers provide detailed information to pupils on how to improve their work. Pupils say they find this helpful, although they are not provided with enough time to respond to the comments and demonstrate the advised improvements.

The headteacher shows a clear determination to move the school on and is tackling weaknesses in leadership capacity. Clarification of leadership roles and clear expectations for subject leaders, particularly in English and mathematics, have led to a sharper focus on the most vital improvements to raise standards. For example, the school has recently introduced curricular targets in writing and mathematics. Pupils are beginning to use these targets to monitor their own progress. Regular pupils' progress meetings identify pupils requiring additional support, and interventions are appropriately planned. In addition, teachers are involved in moderating pupils' writing. However, there remains an overdependency on the headteacher to drive the improvements; the strategic leadership of other senior and middle leaders is limited. The governing body has been strengthened and the skills of new members are being effectively used to monitor the work of the school. The governing body has

improved the provision and infrastructure of ICT, enabling pupils to access netbooks and Fizzbooks for learning in lessons. Procedures for safeguarding are satisfactory; the school is aware of the need to ensure all staff are appropriately trained and vetted to safeguard pupils.

The statement of action written after the May 2011 inspection generally met requirements but two amendments were required to show how pupils' progress in ICT would be measured and the timescales and milestones for measuring the improvements to the quality of teaching. This information is now included in the action plan and the statement of action meets requirements. The school has valued and benefited from the consultants and advisers from the local authority, in particular the leadership support from the Local Leader of Education. Local authority officers are regularly involved in monitoring and evaluating progress against the identified areas for improvement. Staff from partner schools provide effective support for teachers and middle and senior leaders which is helping them to develop and improve their practice.

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

Ann Henderson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2011

- Raise attainment and achievement in reading, writing, mathematics and ICT by:
 - ensuring these skills are systematically practised and developed across the curriculum
 - ensuring that higher-ability pupils attain the levels of which they are capable.
- Ensure that teaching is good or better by:
 - checking rigorously that progress data and the moderation of pupils' work is accurate, especially in writing
 - using progress and tracking data more effectively to plan for the learning needs of every pupil
 - making sure, both verbally and through marking, that pupils understand what they need to do to improve.
- Accelerate the recent improvements in senior and middle management by ensuring all leaders:
 - have a clear understanding of their roles in raising standards and achievement
 - are able to identify strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility quickly and to take effective and decisive action.