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Mr A Rushton
Headteacher
Netherton CofE Primary School
Highbridge Road
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Dear Mr Rushton

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Netherton CofE Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 25 April 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please thank pupils for their help and time during the inspection.

Since the time of the previous inspection, the school has strengthened the leadership team by appointing an additional assistant headteacher, creating the role of phase leader for both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and by forming a school improvement committee in the governing body.

As a result of the inspection on 20 September 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 good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Achievement has risen since the time of the previous inspection. The strong emphasis in extending opportunities for pupils to write across a wide variety of topics has enthused pupils. Consequently, standards of writing have improved for pupils in all years. Children start the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge below those expected for their age. Children were observed purposefully working in a variety of areas. They were enthused by the new topic of dinosaurs and some had chosen to write about the tyrannosaurus rex.

The school has extended opportunities to improve pupils' reading. Pupils in Key Stage 1 practise their phonic work every day and additional support is provided for

specific Key Stage 2 pupils. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to check their comprehension when a pupil appears to be unsure of the meaning of a word. Improved tracking and analysis of attainment data has meant pupils who need additional support are quickly identified and support provided. The school's accurate assessment records indicate that, at the end of Key Stage 1, attainment in writing, reading and mathematics is broadly average. Records also show that pupils make much improved progress across all years in Key Stage 2, and results in this year's Key Stage 2 tests for both English and mathematics are expected to be broadly average. If this is confirmed, pupils will have made good progress. The well-directed additional support to improve pupils' numeracy skills has shown some pupils make especially rapid progress in mathematics. The school has utilised its Pupil Premium funding to give effective additional support to pupils for both literacy and numeracy.

The quality of teaching and learning has improved so that now more teaching is good with none that is inadequate. Teachers now make good use of assessment information so that work is well matched to pupils' abilities. Pupils enjoy the new curriculum and they enjoy practising their literacy and numeracy skills within the topic work. This has also meant that attendance has improved and is above average. Behaviour is good because pupils are fully engaged in their learning.

Lessons get off to a purposeful start and staff quickly engage pupils in their learning. Improved planning ensures pupils then have opportunities to practise and consolidate their skills. Staff use questioning well to assess how pupils are progressing and the expectation of pupils giving full answers helps them to understand their work. However, planning does not systematically identify key questions which can extend pupils so that staff can then check understanding.

Senior leaders have been successful in bringing about improvements to the quality of teaching and raising achievement. Leaders have been instrumental in supporting their teams and bringing about improvements to planning and teaching. The regular monitoring of aspects of work in classrooms, for example 'class essentials', has meant staff are held to account for their work and this is linked to performance management. Monitoring also informs areas where additional support and coaching are required to further improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The introduction of the school improvement committee has been instrumental in holding senior staff to account for their work in improving the quality of education within the school. Targets for pupils are more challenging and based on rates of progress faster than the national average. The progress made by pupils is analysed every half-term to ensure pupils are making good progress and to hold staff and leaders to account for pupils' achievement. This also ensures any pupil requiring additional support is identified swiftly and suitable support provided.

The local authority supports the school well. Its statement of action is good. It provides a solid framework for further improvement, including suitable support for the leadership of the school, subject expertise and for the governing body. The

attached adviser is a regular visitor and the school has benefited from support from a leadership consultant with recent relevant headteacher experience.

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

Michael Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise attainment by increasing the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by ensuring staff:
 - use information they have about the pupils' earlier learning to set tasks that provide the right level of challenge for all pupils
 - deliver brisk lesson introductions that maintain pupils' engagement and leave sufficient time for them to practise and apply their skills
 - ask questions throughout lessons that require pupils to show their understanding.

- Raise attainment in writing by providing pupils with more opportunities to write on topics that motivate them and have a real purpose.

- Ensure that leaders and managers accelerate the pace of improvement by:
 - setting ambitious targets for pupils' progress
 - analysing information about pupils' progress swiftly to ensure that any barriers to learning are promptly identified and removed
 - establishing systems that hold leaders at all levels to account for the impact of their activities on pupils' achievement.