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4 March 2008

Ms K Chapman  
The Acting Headteacher  
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Long Compton  
Shipston-on-Stour  
Warwickshire  
CV36 5LA

Dear Ms Chapman

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ACORNS PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit to your school on 20 and 21 February 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in February 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Warwickshire.

Yours sincerely

Ken Buxton  
H M Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF ACORNS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the second monitoring inspection: 20 and 21 February 2008

### Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, members of the teaching staff, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and representatives from the local authority (LA). The inspector also held a telephone conversation with the consultant headteacher who is providing the school with support.

### Context

Since the last monitoring inspection in September 2007, the acting headteacher's appointment has been confirmed until the end of the summer term. In addition, one teacher has returned following a period of absence and a part time teacher has been employed on a temporary contract to replace a teacher who resigned. The school is no longer employing supply teachers to cover for teachers' long term absence which has stabilised the staffing situation.

The governing body is actively exploring the potential of a federation model in order to secure the future of the school.

### Achievement and standards

The standards achieved by pupils in the most recent statutory assessments were covered in detail in the previous monitoring report. The work seen in pupils' books and the school's records shows that, overall, pupils are now making generally satisfactory progress. Most are working at the levels expected and are on track to achieve their personal targets. However, the progress pupils achieve in lessons varies widely across the school reflecting the teachers' differing attention to detail about what pupils will learn on a day to day basis.

In the Foundation Stage children get off to a good start and are prepared well for Key Stage 1. This promising beginning has not continued into Key Stage 1. There have been recent changes in the teaching personnel for pupils in Key Stage 1, which has meant pupils having to adjust to changes in personnel. The school recognises that pupils' progress has been impacted and knows that there is a degree of urgency needed to ensure that pupils are achieving the standards of which they are capable. In Key Stage 2, the school's assessment data shows that the majority of pupils are working to their capability. The school's recent efforts to improve pupils' achievement in mathematics and science are showing signs of being successful. Teachers' expectations of pupils' attainment have increased and teachers are making significant efforts to relate lessons more to pupils' interests and experiences. For example, the recently introduced practical approach to teaching science is already capturing pupils' imagination and enthusing them into wanting to learn more about the world in which they live.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2007:

- improve achievement in Years 3 to 6, particularly in mathematics and science, by raising teachers' expectations, making lessons more interesting and improving pupils' confidence in their own abilities – satisfactory.

### Personal development and well-being

Pupils enjoy coming to school and speak positively about their work in lessons. As a result, attendance has improved and is now good. Pupils behave well and demonstrate good manners towards each other and adults. They have positive attitudes to learning and their relationships with adults and other pupils are good. They participate well during assemblies, listening attentively and singing together. Pupils feel safe both during lessons and break times. They feel confident to approach adults if they have any concerns.

### Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning is improving. The judgements of lessons made during the inspection visit match closely with those of the school and the LA that teaching is good overall, but that some weaknesses remain. Where teaching is inadequate the planning does not specify in enough detail what pupils will learn, activities are not differentiated, time is not used effectively, and pupils do not make sufficient progress.

Overall, the picture is more positive than at the time of the last monitoring visit. The staff have worked hard to improve pupils' learning and, as a result, the classrooms are bright and cheerful with lively displays that reflect the work pupils are engaged in. The teachers are working together more as a cohesive team, which is helping to improve the consistency of pupils' experiences while at school. This, in turn, has helped improve staff morale. As a result, pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the increased purposefulness that is evident across the school. However, while acknowledging that a corner has been turned, the school recognises that much remains to be done, but sees that there is now a common desire to implement the improvements required.

The teaching in mathematics, science and English lessons has benefited from the support provided for these subjects from the LA's advisers. As a result of their input, most teachers are matching lessons better to pupils' interests and this improves the relevance to pupils' learning. Most are also planning lessons that are more accurately matched to pupils' different abilities. However, teachers need to develop their expertise and confidence of using information and communication technology (ICT) during lessons in order to maximise the exciting opportunities available.

Teachers have set appropriate targets for pupils to achieve and are introducing systems to monitor the progress being made. Most teachers have also become increasingly adept at using assessment opportunities at the end of lessons to determine what pupils have learned and to identify any underachievement. They are also planning better for pupils' next steps. A marking policy has been introduced recently to improve the consistency of teachers' marking and ensure that pupils

understand how their work could be improved. Although teachers have made a good start implementing the policy, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this development on pupils' attainment. However, staff have started to meet each half term to review and track pupils' progress. Working initially in consultation with LA advisers, the staff have now taken ownership of these meetings. As a result of this initiative, they are becoming more aware of the standards pupils are attaining and better placed to determine whether they are making sufficient progress.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2007:

- use accurate assessment to check pupils' progress and identify and address underachievement by ensuring that work set provides all pupils, including the more able, with sufficient challenge – satisfactory
- tell pupils clearly what they have to do to improve their work – satisfactory.

### Leadership and management

The decision to ratify the acting headteacher's temporary position has brought a sense of stability to the school's leadership. She is working closely with the LA to monitor the developments taking place across the school and to gauge the rate of progress being achieved. The monitoring of teaching has given the school a clear view of its strengths and weaknesses. In addition, there is a stronger sense of purpose and teamwork evident throughout the school and staff are focusing increasingly on how they can improve the quality of their teaching. The staff now need to place a greater emphasis on judging how well their teaching enables pupils to make progress.

The acting headteacher has made good use of the consultant headteacher's expertise to devise a draft development plan for the school. This builds sensibly on the key issues identified in the school's inspection report and sets out the actions needed to bring about the changes being planned. It also sets out appropriate key priorities for subsequent years. This development demonstrates the growing confidence that exists within the school's leadership that it can take responsibility for the future direction of the school.

The increased stability of the staffing situation has provided the acting headteacher with an opportunity to involve colleagues in subject leadership. The LA has provided considerable support to the staff involved, developing their knowledge and understanding of the responsibilities. The staff have each been involved in monitoring their subjects and, as a result, good progress has been made with each preparing an action plan for their respective subjects. The action plans are detailed and challenging. In reality, they are probably overambitious in what can be achieved in the current year and some actions may need to be deferred to subsequent years. They also need to match more closely with the actions included in the school's development plan and identify measurable success criteria that are related to pupils' attainment, to monitor progress, and to judge impact.

Governance has improved. The governing body is almost up to full strength and there is a renewed sense of responsibility for their school. The LA has provided coaching during governing body meetings which has helped develop the governing body's understanding of how to act as a critical friend to the school's leaders. The

acting headteacher's reports to the governors provide regular updates on the progress being achieved against the key priorities. Individual governors have been linked to specific subjects and through their involvement they are becoming more aware of pupils' performance in their areas.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2007:

- develop leadership and management, including monitoring and evaluation, at all levels so there is a clear basis for planning improvements and reliable strategies for seeing them through – satisfactory.

### External support

Since the last monitoring visit the LA has moved rapidly, responding to and addressing the points made in the previous monitoring letter. An experienced headteacher has been identified to work with, and support, the acting headteacher. She has provided valuable one to one mentoring for the equivalent of two and a half days each week. In addition, she has supported the acting headteacher with the appointment of a new member of staff and provided guidance with writing the school's development plan. She has also provided opportunities for members of staff to work informally with staff from her school to help them prepare for taking on the role of subject leader.

The LA has also provided extensive support from its subject advisers, which has been welcomed and proved beneficial. The LA's judgements about the school's progress are accurate and there is a good understanding of what the next steps are. These now need to be included in the next stage of the LA's support and monitoring plan, which is due for renewal.

### Priorities for further improvement

- Remove uncertainty over the school's future and resolve the temporary leadership situation.
- Ensure that observations of teaching evaluate its impact on pupils' learning.
- Increase the relevance of the curriculum to pupils by planning lessons that are aligned more closely to their interests and experiences.
- Increase teachers' confidence and capability of using ICT to enhance their teaching and so improve pupils' rate of progress.
- Ensure that the school's development/action plans include measurable success criteria that reflect pupils' attainment.
- Update the LA's support and monitoring plan.