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5 June 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 13 and 14 May 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third 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 third monitoring inspection: 13 and 14 May 2008

### Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the acting headteacher, members of the teaching staff, pupils, the chair and vice chair of governors, the consultant headteacher and representatives from the local authority (LA).

### Context

Since the last monitoring inspection in February 2008, the proposal to support the school through creating a federation with a neighbouring school has not proved immediately possible. The acting headteacher is due to leave the school at the end of this academic year, having been recalled by the governors of her school. The school's leadership is currently managing a period of staff absence.

### Achievement and standards

Children continue to do well in the Foundation Stage and make good progress, which ensures that they are prepared well for Year 1. However, because the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 varies, pupils' progress slows and, although attainment is above the national average, pupils are not yet achieving their full potential. In Key Stage 2 the school's tracking data shows that pupils make better progress as the vast majority are meeting and exceeding the standards expected nationally in English and mathematics. The school has focused its efforts on improving pupils' performance in mathematics and this strategy has paid off with almost all pupils reaching their challenging individual targets. Indeed, assessment information suggests that most of the Year 6 pupils will achieve the higher Level 5 in their National Curriculum mathematics assessments. Pupils achieve less well in science. The school's recent work scrutiny shows signs that, although the recently introduced practical approach to teaching science is enthusing pupils, there is still an over reliance on worksheets and teachers are not planning sufficiently to meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making satisfactory progress.

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 are positive about school and clearly enjoy their lessons. Attendance continues to improve and is now well above the national average. Pupils are attentive during lessons and behaviour is always at least good. Pupils are proud of their school and

enjoy being given opportunities to take responsibilities. For example, the school council is looking forward to planning the purchase of some additional playground games to enhance break times. Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities and attendance for clubs is good; the dance club ended with a well attended performance to parents. Pupils respond well to opportunities to participate in out of school activities and the planned residential visit, to Marle Hall in North Wales, is generating considerable excitement. Staff take great care of the pupils, which ensures that pupils feel confident to approach adults with their concerns. As a result, there is a safe and harmonious atmosphere throughout the school, which is conducive to promoting pupils' personal development and well-being.

### Quality of provision

During the inspection visit the normal teaching arrangements were changed to accommodate staff absence. All the classes were inspected and all lessons were judged to be at least satisfactory with some good features. No inadequate teaching was observed. This is due, in part, to the fact that observations of teaching are focusing more clearly on pupils' learning and this ensures that teachers are using their assessment information more accurately to plan pupils' next steps.

Staff are working hard to address the issues identified in the inspection report. There is a clear sense of purpose and determination, which is paying dividends. The classrooms provide bright and stimulating environments with vibrant displays linked to current topics; many include good examples of pupils' current work, which is increasingly linked to pupils' interests and experiences. Staff morale is high and pupils are responding positively to the changes.

The better quality teaching is characterised by detailed planning identifying what pupils will learn, teachers' clear expectations of pupils, a faster pace, and work linked more closely to individual needs. However, inherent weaknesses in teaching remain in Key Stage 1, where staffing issues continue to dominate. These are being addressed as appropriate plans have been implemented to use the local authority's subject advisers to provide and deliver targeted support. This is intended to match the work more closely to pupils' abilities and so increase pupils' progress but, again, staff absence has reduced its overall effectiveness and impact.

Teaching assistants are playing an increasingly important role in supporting the quality of teaching and learning. They work well with teachers to ensure pupils make the progress expected in lessons, often monitoring their learning. Teachers are regularly ensuring that teaching assistants are briefed well about their roles and responsibilities and this is having a positive impact on the quality of support they provide.

Arrangements for assessing and monitoring pupils' performance are working well. Teachers are becoming more familiar with, and confident at, assessing pupils' learning in lessons. This is helping them to have a better understanding of what pupils need to do next in order to improve. Most teachers make accurate assessments of pupils against the National Curriculum level descriptors, which is backed up and supported by secure evidence that is used to moderate judgements during the regular meetings held each term. These developments enable teachers to

establish how much progress individuals are making and identify where additional support is needed.

The recently produced marking policy is beginning to be used throughout the school, although it is still early days in judging its overall impact. At present there is some variation in how teachers are implementing it across the school. Plans are now in hand to spread the good practice that exists and provide dedicated time for older pupils to respond to teachers' comments.

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 – good
- tell pupils clearly what they have to do to improve their work – satisfactory.

### Leadership and management

Since the last inspection visit the acting headteacher has continued to provide a clear direction for the school's improvement. The LA has started to gradually reduce the level of support provided as the school shows increasing capability to manage its own destiny. This has led to the consultant headteacher's support being reduced to the equivalent of one day each week, which is proving a better balance and use of time. Working together, the consultant headteacher and acting headteacher have completed the school's integrated development plan, which has been presented and shared with the staff and governors. This sets out the key actions planned to address the issues identified in the inspection report and it also takes a longer term view for the school's future. These include well thought out plans to enhance the school's ICT provision and provide focused training for staff in order to raise their confidence and capability in using ICT in their lessons. The success criteria being used to monitor the plan's impact are generally appropriate but are not always easily quantifiable and not all focus explicitly on how pupils will benefit.

Under the acting headteacher's direction, the importance of the subject leader's role has been recognised and plans put in place to develop this level of leadership. The English and mathematics subject leaders are delivering staff training sessions and leading on meetings to review pupil progress. The LA's advisers have worked closely with the subject leaders and supported them in their role and helped to refine their action plans. The quality of the English and mathematics plans is good and the respective subject leaders are making good use of them to instigate improvements. Staff absence has meant that work on the science plan has fallen behind schedule and, as a consequence, less progress has been achieved.

The governing body is making a significant difference to the school by increasingly holding the leadership to account. The chair of governors provides strong support to the school and is clearly focused on raising standards. The decision to create a third committee has helped to delegate the governing body's growing workload across all members. As a result, there is a greater understanding of the school's work and the governors' efforts are helping to provide a stabilising influence. The systems used to inform the governing body work well and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas to develop. However, the recent delay in pursuing a

federation model and the acting headteacher's recall to her own school, at the end of the academic year, came as a surprise to the governing body and the governors are rightly concerned about the implications for the school's continued progress and stability. They recognise that a change of leadership at this time will need to be managed very carefully so as not to undermine the school's fragile position and lose momentum in its efforts to be removed from a category.

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

The external support provided by the LA has been good. Since the last monitoring visit, the LA's support and monitoring plan has been updated appropriately to accommodate the recent changes and refine the new areas of focus. The consultant headteacher has worked very well with the acting headteacher to offer guidance and provide practical advice helping to formulate the actions needed to bring about improvements. The LA's intervention inspector has provided good support to the school and its governing body. The governors have improved their understanding of the need to challenge decisions to ensure that the best options for the pupils are being pursued. The work of the LA's subject advisers has been excellent in providing focused support to the school and the positive impact of their efforts can be seen in the progress being made by the subject leaders for English and mathematics.

### Priorities for further improvement

- Remove uncertainty over the school's future and resolve the temporary leadership situation.
- Improve the quality of teaching by planning appropriately differentiated activities that better meet pupils' individual needs and so enable all pupils to make progress.
- Ensure that teachers' expectations of behaviour are communicated consistently across the school.
- Ensure that teachers implement the marking policy consistently so that feedback focuses pupils' attention on how they can improve their work.
- Complete and implement the science action plan so that it can make the impact intended on improving the quality of science teaching and pupils' learning.