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Mrs J Rowland
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Rowland

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when Sonja Oyen HMI and I inspected your school on Thursday, 3 December 2009. Please pass on our thanks to the pupils we talked to, and to governors, parents and the representative of the local authority who gave up their time to talk to us at short notice.

This was a return monitoring visit after the first visit in May 2009 raised very serious concerns about the situation at the school. Since then, two teachers have left and two new teachers have been appointed from September; a deputy headteacher on one year's secondment and a teacher on a permanent contract. A fall in the number of pupils has led to the reduction in the number of classes, from four to three. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are now taught with Year 1 pupils in Class 1, pupils in Years 2 to 4 are taught in Class 2, and the Year 5 and 6 pupils continue to be taught together, as before, but in the new Class 3.

As a result of the inspection in April 2008, the school was asked to raise the achievement of all pupils; give pupils more responsibility in assessing their learning; and, improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially the outdoor provision.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Results of the end of Key Stage 2 national tests in 2009 were a considerable improvement on those of previous years. They were significantly above the average. Pupils in the current Year 6 are also on track to attain similar and possibly higher standards. However, as there are many capable pupils, this is no better than what should be expected of them. Overall, throughout the school, pupils are making improved progress. Pupils have very good attitudes to work and get on with each other very well. They are keen to learn and they are very well-behaved. Generally, they have very well developed language and communication skills and their responses to teachers' questions are often articulate and intelligent. Written work of imagination and creativity was observed from pupils as young as those in Year 1, but standards of presentation in all classes, including the application of the rules of spelling, grammar and punctuation, were not as high as they should be.

The strengths of the school noted in the inspection report of April 2008 have been maintained. The school has a strong family and Christian ethos that parents value highly. Pupils are happy here. Arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements. Staff promote pupils' personal development well and take good care of them. Pupils are developing a keen sense of concern for environmental issues and their own responsibilities. Although some progress has been made in promoting pupils' independence in their academic work, there is more to do to in this respect. Teaching approaches that involve pupils in developing an accurate view of what they have achieved and what they need to do to achieve more are being introduced but are not yet a consistent feature of all pupils' work.

The quality of teaching is considerably improved from that observed during the May visit. It remains satisfactory overall but there are several good features as better teaching tackles the legacy of underachievement and gaps in pupils' learning. Parents comment positively on the impact the new teachers have made. Relationships with pupils are better. There is more fun and pace to lessons and more interesting activities, and there is a clear attempt to raise standards and measure progress. There remains much to improve. Higher expectations of the presentation of pupils' work is one area requiring improvement and more consideration should be given to meeting the individual needs of pupils within the mixed age classes. This is most urgent in Class 1, where staffing instability has returned and is holding back progress for the youngest children. However, the change in accommodation for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is a positive step and arrangements to develop the outside provision promise better provision for the youngest children in the future.

All areas of leadership and management show progress. The work of the acting headteacher continues to attract the praise and respect of parents and the community. She has the full confidence of parents. She is involving them more as

partners and developing closer links with the wider community. The new teachers are improving subject leadership and introducing more rigorous assessment of pupils' progress, although the process is hampered by gaps in information and concerns over the accuracy of past assessments. New governors have been appointed and the governing body is better organised and prepared to take on its full role of support and challenge. The local authority is providing effective support, such as that to develop the Early Years Foundation Stage provision, and guidance to the headteacher on prioritising the tasks she faces. It is also providing temporary financial support. However, there are significant shortcomings between what is in place and what is expected of a school's leadership and management nowadays. For example, the school lacks an effective self evaluation on which to base its plans for the future; ranging from a consideration of its vision to a detailed audit of its performance, strengths and weaknesses. The acting headteacher and her new team demonstrate a clear willingness and commitment to strengthen leadership and management. However, the situation remains fragile and warrants the redoubling of efforts by all those concerned with the school to accelerate progress in those areas where the school has fallen behind in the past.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Brian Padgett
Her Majesty's Inspector