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Mr D Clifford
Inverteign Community Nursery and Primary School
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Dear Mr Clifford

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 October 2009, for the time given to discussions with staff during the visit and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please convey my thanks to everyone I spoke with during my visit, including the pupils, governors, teachers, support staff and local authority officer. Their warm welcome and cooperation were much appreciated.

In the past year there have been few changes to staffing, although the leadership structure at the school has been reorganised.

As a result of the inspection on 1-2 October 2008, the school was asked to:

- ensure that all actions focus on raising standards and achievement
- improve teaching through consistently following up gains made during intervention activities and by raising expectations for higher-ability pupils
- raise the levels of attendance through the use of more effective systems
- ensure individual and curricular targets are sharply focused on improving the basic skills of calculation, reading and writing.

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.

Inverteign continues to work as a school in challenging circumstances. The headteacher has, in his first year at the school, ensured that all are united in seeking to raise pupils' achievement as a key priority. The progress each individual pupil makes is now carefully tracked and teachers are fully accountable for this. Meetings for all staff and teams have been established and new leadership roles have been



defined. This has enabled the school to make useful modifications to its timetables and its arrangements for grouping older pupils in literacy and numeracy. Work is underway to develop a creative curriculum with an international dimension.

The headteacher and some subject leaders have carefully and accurately appraised the quality of teaching and learning. The lessons seen during the inspection were at least satisfactory. Good features were also evident. New strategies that have been developed through the staff's professional development are now apparent in class. Teachers generally model new concepts well and make good use of interactive whiteboards to help make learning more multi-sensory for the pupils. Their subject knowledge is secure. They emphasise the importance of pupils understanding the key language of learning and offer pupils engaging activities in class. For example, Year 6 pupils enjoyed their first look at the ways in which newspaper articles draw in the reader. However, there remains some variability. In some sessions the pace drops and pupils are not yet always being fully involved in their own learning. Some teachers offer able pupils focused, stepped challenges through their whole-class teaching but this is not widespread. The use of guided group work, through which teachers can focus on moving the learning of able pupils forward more quickly, is underdeveloped. Leaders recognise there is more to do to embed good practices consistently across all subjects and classes.

Children typically start school with very low levels of attainment. The closer attention the school now pays to each pupil's progress and the strategies being put in place to move their learning forward are having a positive impact. However, the inconsistency seen in teaching is reflected in the variation that exists in rates of progress. While pupils in some year groups made accelerated progress in reading, writing and numeracy, achievement was slower in others. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities made good progress, as did more-able pupils in some year groups. While most pupils who were targeted for additional support in reading and writing made good progress, the achievement of those needing extra help in numeracy was less marked. The proportion of pupils reaching age-expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics improved last year. A high number of pupils continue to receive additional support. This, and the fact that for some older pupils accelerated progress has only been secured in their latter years at the school, serves to lower overall attainment. Standards remain low and few pupils reach the higher levels in the national assessments and tests by the end of Year 2 and 6.

The school has continued to show a deep commitment to each pupil's personal development. It has continued to work very closely with families to address the barriers to learning that exist and to find ways of supporting parents in helping their children to learn. In the past 12 months the school has had particular success in helping to reintegrate pupils who were at serious risk of exclusion. As part of its work in this regard, the school has taken concerted action to address the very low attendance and punctuality rates. Following some careful monitoring, a comprehensive action plan was drawn up in order to seek to reduce the overall absence rates and the number of pupils who were persistently absent. Through close



links with external agencies, the provision of learning mentors for individual pupils and by close consultation with its families, the school has secured a notable improvement in attendance rates over 12 months. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has decreased significantly. However, attendance rates remain low and there is more to do to secure an increase to broadly average levels.

Following the last inspection the school has reviewed its target-setting practices. There has been a concerted focus on establishing curriculum targets focused on basic skills with the whole class. Over time, these targets are layered so that pupils of different abilities, including the more able, are suitably challenged. In literacy this approach is now starting to pay dividends. Pupils are given detailed feedback as to how to improve their writing through the school's revised marking system in the subject. Similar approaches are planned to ensure that pupils are as familiar with their numeracy targets and receive individualised feedback in a more consistent way than is evident at present. Older pupils are now being encouraged to self-assess their own work and that of their peers using agreed 'success criteria' as to what successful learning looks like, but this initiative is at an early stage. Overall, progress has been steady rather than rapid, in part because some pupils have needed longer to adapt to approaches which require them to revisit and improve completed work.

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

David Townsend

Her Majesty's Inspector

