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Mr John Hunter
Headteacher
Mexborough St John the Baptist C of E Primary School
Sedgefield Way
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Dear Mr Hunter

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 May 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please thank all staff, pupils and the chair of the governing body who found time to talk to me and helped me to get to know your school.

As a result of the inspection on 20–21 May 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards by increasing the proportion of good teaching and by using challenging targets more effectively
- ensure pupils in Reception have access to a wider range of outdoor learning activities to improve their skills in all areas of learning
- improve assessment and marking procedures so that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work
- sharpen the focus of improvement planning and evaluation so that leaders are able to demonstrate the impact of their actions on improving outcomes for pupils.

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

The school's results in the 2009 national tests for 11-year-olds show that standards by Year 6 were significantly above that expected nationally in English and science. Boys' attainment was slightly higher than that of girls. Standards improved significantly from the previous year, with a strong showing in English, especially the percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 5. Evidence from the school's own comprehensive tracking system, lesson observations and scrutiny of books indicate that standards in 2010 are likely to be slightly better than the previous year with more pupils predicted to reach the higher levels in English and mathematics. Although standards are improving in mathematics, it is at a slower rate than in English.

Standards in 2009 at Year 2 dipped, compared to the previous year. Leaders have sought help from the local authority to moderate their assessments and ensure staff are confident and consistent when marking pieces of work. As a result, inspection evidence and the school's data confirm that pupils in Key Stage 1 are making expected or better progress from their starting points and likely to improve their results this year. These improvements are also due to the more detailed systems in place to gather assessment data which includes not only tracking the progress made by different groups of pupils but also those born at different times of the year to ensure all are doing as well as they can.

Most teaching observed during the inspection was good. The more effective teaching was typified by a brisker pace, more interesting subject matter, skilful questioning and high expectations. Teachers are all now using data provided by the school to guide their planning and influence their groupings of pupils in order that those who may be underachieving receive extra help. Classes benefit from clear goals in literacy especially, so that pupils and their parents know what they have to learn at any given time. Pupils are also becoming involved in assessing their own and others' progress in lessons. Understandably these procedures are taking some time to be implemented fully, but there are clear indications that standards are rising, especially in mathematics, for example. The school recognises, however, that the quality of marking is still too variable. Pupils' work and successes are praised; on the other hand, there are few comments to help them understand how improvements can be made.

The school has responded positively to the issues identified at its inspection in May 2008 and this can be seen clearly in the outdoor provision provided for Reception children. They have a good variety of activities and materials to use so that they can develop and improve their skills in all the Early Learning Goals. Appropriate plans are in place to develop some aspects further, for example creative development. Children and staff welcome this outside area and the opportunities made available, for example, to investigate and find mini-beasts as well as providing areas for imaginative play.

Leaders have worked hard to improve systems of monitoring and evaluation to ensure they are accurate and reflect how well pupils are attaining. Lesson observations, which are currently undertaken by the headteacher, together with book scrutiny, enquiry walks and interrogation of progress data, are used by leaders to evaluate how actions taken by all staff are affecting pupil progress. To date, raising standards is an evident result. The capacity for sustained improvement is good because of the success already evident in improved outcomes for pupils, together with the determination of the headteacher and the commitment and enthusiasm of all staff.

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

Marianne Young
Her Majesty's Inspector