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Mr G Chown
The Executive Headteacher
Hemyock Primary School
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Dear Mr Chown

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 30 June 2010 and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please convey my gratitude to the head of teaching and learning, other members of staff and pupils who met with me as well as to the acting chair of the governing body and the School Improvement Partner.

There have been some significant developments in the governance, leadership and management of the school. On 4 May 2010, Hemyock joined the Children First Federation of three primary schools. There is now an executive headteacher, formerly the headteacher of one of the other schools, and a federated governing body. Each school has a head of teaching and learning. The post holder for this school is the previous deputy headteacher and the former headteacher holds a similar position in one of the other schools.

As a result of the inspection on 8 and 9 July 2008, the school was asked to:

- use assessment data and marking of pupils' work more effectively to personalise individual targets so that all pupils, particularly the more able and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve the standards of which they are capable
- strengthen the curriculum to ensure more creativity in linking of subjects and the robust promotion of multicultural awareness
- develop the accountability of middle managers in monitoring teaching and learning throughout the school
- develop an outdoor area that will enhance the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.

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.

Pupils' progress is improving. Standards attained by the end of Year 2 were broadly average in 2009, an improvement on the previous year. The recently finalised assessments for 2010 show a further rise in attainment, particularly in the numbers achieving the higher Level 3. Year 6 pupils who left in the summer of 2009 made satisfactory progress and their test results were average. The school's data indicate that current Year 6 pupils have made better progress and more are on track to achieve the higher Level 5 than previously. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has also improved. In lessons observed, pupils' behaviour was good. Pupils were interested in their work and sustained their concentration well. Pupils are happy at the school and pleased with the way they contribute to its day-to-day organisation. They particularly appreciate challenging work as it is 'really testing your brains'.

More rigorous termly tracking of how well pupils are doing is a key reason why progress is improving. Targets for improving work in English and mathematics are displayed in each classroom, although sometimes the text is small and the language rather inaccessible for some. They are sent to parents and carers. Targets displayed are not consistently linked with individual pupils in all classes. Older pupils interviewed knew their targets and valued teachers' marking for its blend of identifying successful and less effective features of their work. Marking seen in pupils' literacy books was conscientious and frequent but showed some inconsistency in the quality of guidance for pupils on how to do better.

Pupils enjoy the new cross-curricular whole-school topics with opportunities for linking subjects and developing their writing skills in different contexts. New topics enable pupils to explore cultures in other parts of the world, for example in the work on patterns, but the school recognises that building pupils' understanding of cultural diversity in Britain remains an area for further development. A new outdoor area has been established for the Early Years Foundation Stage, adjoining the classroom with easy access to the extensive school grounds, and its use for children's learning is planned carefully. There have been some delays in installing a cover to support use throughout the year and this work is scheduled for the summer holiday.

Middle managers' activities have developed well, guided by a monitoring calendar, and have included opportunities to develop managers' own skills and to check the quality of teaching and learning. The results are captured in an annual review of their area of responsibility. Currently these do not cover all subjects and it is intended to draw on strengths across the new federation to assist. Senior leaders have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement and a clear view on how the school might benefit from the new arrangements, although it is too soon for these to have had a significant impact.

The local authority helped the school in laying foundations for further improvement following the previous inspection, and made helpful information on federation available to assist governors in exploring the issues. The School Improvement Partner has provided ongoing support and challenge.

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

Grahame Sherfield
Her Majesty's Inspector