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27 January 2011

Mrs E McIntosh  
Headteacher  
Ecton Village Primary School  
West Street  
Ecton  
Northampton  
NN6 0QF

Dear Mrs McIntosh

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Ecton Village Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 26 January 2011, for the time you gave to our discussions before the visit and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the Chair of the Governing Body for coming in to talk to me at such short notice.

Since the last inspection, the number of pupils on roll has fallen by 10% to 45. Two long-term supply teachers and one other member of staff have left the school and two new members of staff have been appointed including an Early Years Foundation Stage leader. There is a new leadership team in place. Now, two of the three classes are taught by full-time teachers, the other class is taught on a job share basis by the headteacher for two days a week and another teacher for three days. There has been extensive internal redecorating and carpeting since the last visit. As part of the visit, the procedures for safeguarding children were checked and found to meet requirements.

As a result of the inspection on 7 December 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

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.

At the last inspection, the school was asked to devise a strategy to raise standards in Year 2 and Year 6 and to provide more time for the headteacher to monitor this strategy to make sure that standards were improving. An improvement strategy has

been devised and clearly communicated to all staff. The school improvement plan, written by the headteacher, does focus on raising attainment although it does not set sharp enough targets or measurable milestones to ensure that attainment improves. The issue for this small school is the very small cohorts that take the national tests in Year 2 and Year 6 which make comparisons unrealistic. For example in 2010, one pupil took the Year 2 test and nine took the Year 6 test, so year-on-year outcomes vary enormously, although the attainment trend is always around the national average. Work seen in books and in lesson observations during the visit confirms this and also demonstrates that there has been progress with literacy. There is more evidence of a range of writing in books, and regular comprehension activities as well as high expectations of the older pupils reading a book a week. As a result, all pupils develop secure reading skills. The weakest area of the core curriculum is mathematics, where there has not been enough progress with raising attainment by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Individual pupils within the three mixed-age classes, especially those in Year 2 and Year 6, are not supported enough and do not make enough use of different strategies to help them with mental calculations. The governing body has developed more links with the school curriculum since the last inspection and is beginning to hold the school to account for the ongoing variation in outcomes.

The school was also asked to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the three classes. As part of this monitoring visit, lessons were observed in all classes and in the Acorns Pre-School class. There remains too much variation in teaching quality between classes. Work is not sufficiently differentiated to meet the needs of all learners. For some pupils, the work is too easy and for others, it is too hard. There has not been enough work since the last inspection on the recommendation to ensure that teachers use assessment information to plan appropriate work for pupils of all abilities. The use of APP (Assessing Pupils' Progress) is not developed as much as that in other schools. The lesson plans teachers devise do not take enough account of individual pupils or focus enough on clear and measurable learning objectives.

The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is good. However, some pupils move off task when lessons are not interesting enough or they are not sufficiently challenged or motivated by the activity. Attendance for the last school year, 2009-2010, was 93.4%, below the national average, but a huge increase on previous years which were below 90%. The school has worked hard to reduce the large number of persistent absentees, and attendance since the start of this academic year has been 97%, an all-time high for the school, due to the improved school procedures and the recent appointment of a parent link worker attached to the school. The main reason for poor attendance and persistent absenteeism is condoned absence by some parents.

Discussion with Year 6 pupils demonstrated that some were unaware of the National Curriculum level they are currently working at and did not know enough about what they needed to do to improve their work or move to the next level. The marking of work in books by teachers is inconsistent across the school. Some work is not

marked at all. Many teachers mark to praise effort, but few mark in a way that helps pupils understand where they went wrong or what they need to do to improve in subsequent pieces of work.

The headteacher has successfully pulled the staff together with high expectations and ambition to drive improvement at a quicker rate. Now the school has a stable, motivated staff, it is poised to make quicker progress. The headteacher has an accurate view of the school's overall provision. There is now a much stronger focus and shared culture to improve learning through the school's motto, 'No child left behind'. The headteacher has three consecutive days each week to monitor and support the quality of teaching and learning, and a two-day teaching commitment. This has enabled more opportunities to improve the quality of provision in the school and in the on-site pre-school. It is too early to judge the impact of the new leadership team on improving outcomes.

Much stronger links have been made with the on-site Acorns Pre-School. The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage remains an area of concern due to the lack of learning opportunities for outdoor play. Accurate daily assessments of children's needs are now made and recorded. There is much better sharing of the outcomes of the Early Learning Goals with the main school and, as a consequence, pupils settle quickly in Year 1. Regular meetings are held with the Class 1 teacher to share data and plan joint visits.

The support provided by the local authority has been satisfactory since the last inspection and is providing some practical support for key areas such as the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is still too early to judge the full impact of these actions on improving attainment and accelerating pupils' progress.

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

Yours sincerely

**Clive Kempton HMI**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2009**

- Raise attainment at the ends of Years 2 and 6 by implementing an agreed school strategy for raising standards, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and ensure that it is carefully monitored to ensure that it is having a positive impact.
- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that expectations are raised and that in all lessons, assessment information is used to plan work that offers appropriate challenges to pupils at all ability levels.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - providing the headteacher with more time to monitor and evaluate the work of the school
  - implementation of school policies and plans
  - ensuring governors are better equipped to fulfil their roles as critical friends.
- Improve the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
  - ensuring that learning activities are guided by accurate daily assessments of children's needs
  - strengthening links with the Ecton Acorns Pre-School.