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Mrs W Gibbins  
Headteacher  
Marshlands Primary School  
Marshfoot Lane  
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East Sussex  
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Dear Mrs Gibbins

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of  
Marshlands Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you, your staff and pupils gave when I inspected your school on 15 March 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 7 October 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement, which are set out in the annex to this letter. Since this inspection, pupil numbers have grown steadily. The Nursery is now full and, as a result of increasing numbers, Years 1 and 2 are taught as separate classes.

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.

Leaders and managers are ambitious for the school and pupils. There is a shared vision for, and commitment to, continuous improvement. The headteacher, chair of governors and senior leaders know the school well. Middle leaders are growing in confidence and are fully involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. Good opportunities for professional development underpin a clear and appropriately focused improvement plan. External support for the school is contributing to better outcomes for pupils. The local authority, the Hailsham Learning Cooperative Trust, of which the school is a part, and the Achievement for All National Strategy have provided support that has been well coordinated and targeted by the school's leaders.

Most children join the school with skill levels that are well below national expectations. In particular, language and social skills are under developed. The large



majority are now making good progress, with attainment rising strongly in mathematics and reading. Their gains in writing are slower, however, despite the school's range of well-tailored intervention strategies that are helping to tackle gaps in pupils' skills and understanding.

The school provides a welcoming and calm learning environment. During the inspection pupils were well behaved and helpful. They have positive attitudes to school and learning. Warm and trusting relationships with teachers and support staff are an important factor in pupils' enjoyment of learning and their improving attendance. Attendance is currently average, with a trend of rising figures across classes. The school is working closely, and largely successfully, with families to reduce persistent absence. The monitoring of attendance is thorough. Irregular attendance is followed up tenaciously and good attendance is rewarded and linked to effective learning.

The curriculum continues to develop. Themed activities help to broaden pupils' horizons and raise their awareness of cultural diversity. The school's focus on improving assessment practice has increased teachers' expertise in personalising provision for pupils. The quality of teaching is improving. In the most effective lessons, teachers have a detailed understanding of pupils' prior attainment. They use this to plan and deliver lessons that challenge and engage them. Learning objectives are matched to pupils' individual needs and success criteria are shared and used to check and extend understanding throughout lessons. Pupils have opportunities to evaluate their own and others' work. Open-ended, directed questions encourage pupils to develop speaking and listening, and higher-order thinking skills. Activities support a range of learning styles and require pupils to apply learning independently. In the lessons where pupils make slower progress, the pace is too slow to drive progress forward and activities are too teacher-led. There is sometimes a lack of challenge for more able pupils.

Monitoring activities, including lesson observations, are strongly focused on supporting and accelerating pupils' progress. Careful analysis of the progress of individuals and groups of pupils detects underachievement and triggers concerted remedial action. Teachers are very aware of their accountability for improving attainment. Target setting is appropriately challenging at a whole-school level but lacks meaning for individual pupils, who are still developing ownership of their targets for improvement and working out how they relate to success criteria in lessons. The moderation of assessment information is increasing teachers' understanding of progression and the accuracy of their judgements. However, opportunities for staff, including teaching assistants, to come together and develop a sense of progression and a precise understanding of expectations from the beginning of the Early Years Foundation Stage to the end of Key Stage 2 are not well established.

The school is working hard and effectively to develop partnerships with parents that will promote pupils' learning. Growing numbers of parents support and help to



organise regular school events. Meetings to discuss pupils' learning are well attended. At the time of the previous inspection there were no parent governors, and now there are three. Parents are a constructive and increasingly positive voice in the school. The school is more outward looking. It is clarifying its identity and place within the community and developing as a hub for local activities.

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

Jacqueline White  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve pupils' learning further by ensuring:
  - that they are encouraged to be more independent in deciding how to move their work on
  - that activities in lessons are more practical and engaging so as to sustain the pupils' focus on learning.
- Ensure that the work with the small number of parents whose children miss too much time at school makes more impact on their children's attendance.
- Maximise the impact of the themed activities by making sure that the work matches more closely the pupils' varying abilities in all the subjects involved.
- Promote community cohesion more systematically so pupils are better prepared for the culturally diverse society found in the United Kingdom.