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Mrs C Edmonds  
The Headteacher  
The Ferncumbe C of E Primary School  
The Green  
Hatton  
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Warwickshire  
CV35 7EX

Dear Mrs Edmonds

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 17 June 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Would you please pass my thanks on to the pupils and staff for taking the time to talk to me?

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection on 10 May 2007, the school was asked to:

- raise standards in science by setting more challenging tasks to develop investigational skills and understanding, especially for the more able pupils
- develop easily maintained assessment records that teachers can use to plan more precisely for the needs of everyone within each class
- ensure that pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve standards and raise achievement.

There have been some significant staffing changes since the last inspection. The literacy coordinator is currently on maternity leave and a newly appointed numeracy coordinator took up her post in September 2007.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

You quickly recognised the need to improve the science curriculum as well as develop the skills of the teaching staff. You enlisted the support of the local authority (LA) to provide training for teachers and their assistants in teaching investigative

science. Alongside this, you implemented a structured approach to science planning and provided teachers with helpful proformas for pupils to use when planning investigations and recording their findings. These documents ensure that there is a good progression in developing pupils' investigative skills through the school. Along with the provision of additional resources, these actions have led to a raised profile of science and a real enthusiasm by the pupils. As a result, the rate of progress made by the pupils is increasing. However, on occasions, more able pupils are provided with too much guidance, such as templates for drawing graphs. This limits the challenge for these pupils, on occasions, as it restricts the opportunities for them to think for themselves.

You have set up a detailed and rigorous programme of assessments. The results are recorded clearly and used to track the progress of each pupil in the school against their challenging targets. As a result, you are able to highlight areas of weakness and provide appropriate additional support where it is required. For example, you have accurately identified writing as a cause for concern and put in place actions to address this. The progress that pupils are now making in writing provides clear evidence that you are being successful. Teachers use assessment well in lessons to set suitably challenging work. However, in a few lessons, pupils do not make as much progress as they could because tasks are not sufficiently well matched to the learning objective.

The school has a marking policy in place and this is monitored by senior staff. There are many good examples of effective marking where pupils are given clear guidance about how to improve their work. Particularly good examples were seen in Reception where children make good progress in their writing as a result of very clear written guidance from their teachers. Helpful questions are used effectively by some teachers to extend pupils' thinking. However, these good practices are not consistently evident throughout the school. Good practice is already being developed in setting targets for pupils about the next steps in their learning. Pupils' individual progress books provide further guidance by linking next steps in pupils' learning to National Curriculum levels. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported by having individual education plans written in language they can understand.

The local authority has provided some helpful support by setting up a link with another school to enable peer mentoring to take place. Two half day reviews by a LA inspector have provided good support for the headteacher. The school has supplemented this by buying in additional expertise from the LA to support developments in science.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

Mark Mumby  
Her Majesty's Inspector