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Wednesday 3 November 2010

Mrs Lindsay  
St Laurence Church Junior School  
Bunbury Road  
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Birmingham  
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Dear Mrs Lindsay

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Laurence Church Junior School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Tuesday 2 November 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, staff, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and the consultant who met with me.

Since the inspection in February 2009, the school has experienced high levels of teacher absence. As a result, some classes in the school have had a number of temporary teachers. In July 2009, the governing body appointed an assistant headteacher from within the school. In November 2009 the governing body elected a new chair of governors. At the end of the summer term six teachers left the school and six permanent teachers were recruited. They took up their posts in September 2010. At the same time, governors appointed temporary year group leaders from within the school for Years 3 and 5.

As a result of the inspection on 9 and 10 February 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.

During a turbulent period the headteacher has maintained a strong focus on improving provision and creating a common sense of purpose. Governors share her high expectations for the school. They are increasingly asking more challenging questions and checking the work of the school for themselves. Staff who met with the inspector spoke enthusiastically about the changes taking place in the school. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have tightened the systems for checking the performance of pupils. Each half term, they review assessment information in

September 2010



order to identify areas of weakness and the actions that need to be taken to accelerate pupils' progress. The headteacher acknowledges that more thorough monitoring procedures need to be established in order to ensure all staff consistently implement the identified actions. There has been satisfactory progress in building capacity within the school. The headteacher is strengthening the roles of senior leaders and middle managers by increasing their involvement in monitoring and evaluation. They are checking teacher's planning, discussing pupils' performance with individual teachers and providing staff with some useful advice. This is helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Staffing turbulence has had a negative impact on pupils' progress. For instance, the school's assessment information indicates that last year, pupils in Year 3 did not make enough progress in writing. The school is taking appropriate action to address this underachievement. For example, teachers are increasingly providing opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills through a range of subjects. This is contributing to improvements in pupils' writing. Through targeted support the school successfully improved the attainment of pupils in Year 6. The 2010 provisional results show, the percentage of pupils attaining Level 4 was higher than the previous year in English, mathematics and science.

With helpful support from the local authority, teachers have improved their planning. Teachers are making better use of assessment information to match activities for pupils of different abilities. Teachers are progressively using a range of strategies to ensure pupils of middle ability play a greater part in lessons. These pupils told the inspector they particularly appreciate it when they are given the opportunity to take an active part in lessons. In one effective example, the teacher encouraged pupils to discuss their work in pairs and gave them sufficient time to respond to questions while they solved a problem involving distance and estimation. Improvements in planning and teaching are leading to better rates of progress. Evidence from lesson observations and pupils' work indicates that standards are in line with national expectations. In the majority of lessons, pupils, including those of middle ability make satisfactory progress. Occasionally, pupils make insufficient progress. This happens in some lessons when teachers spend too long talking and do not leave enough time for pupils to complete their tasks.

Pupils' targets have been suitably personalised. The school has introduced individual planners so that pupils can record and monitor progress towards their targets. One pupil commented, 'we know what we are working towards now.' Marking is improving, particularly in English. In the best examples, marking gives pupils the precise advice they need to improve their work. Sometimes pupils respond to teachers' comments and make the required corrections. The school is planning to extend this good practice throughout the school.

The assistant headteacher has worked well with staff to review the school's contribution to community cohesion and evaluate the impact of actions. Through visits and projects, the school has effectively enabled pupils to develop a satisfactory

understanding about the lives of people in communities different from their own.  
The school is in the process of developing links with schools nationally and overseas.

The school has benefited from a suitable level of support from the local authority and a consultant. They have provided training for staff and monitored the school's provision. The impact of their work has been satisfactory.

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

Usha Devi  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Meet statutory requirements by ensuring that pupils have a good understanding of the lives of people in communities different from their own and by evaluating the impact of any actions that are taken to improve community cohesion.
- Ensure that all senior and middle managers play a full and effective role in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.
- Ensure that pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve their work through the better use of marking and more personalised targets.
- Ensure that middle ability pupils can play as great a part in lessons as others, so as to improve their progress.