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Ms Tonnie Simpson
St Mary Magdalene CofE Primary School
Rowington Close
Warwick Estate
London
W2 5TF

Dear Ms Simpson

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Mary Magdalene Church of England Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 19 May 2011, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils who were welcoming and a pleasure to meet.

You took up post two terms before the last inspection since when there have been changes to staffing in Years 3 and 4 and the Early Years Foundation Stage. In September 2010 a family liaison officer was appointed. There have been many changes to the fabric of the school and to classroom organisation.

As a result of the inspection on 21 and 22 January 2010, 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 good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Pupils, and most parents and carers, are very aware of the importance of coming to school every day, on time; pupils appreciate the awards for attendance and punctuality. The target set in the previous report was not met, mainly because a few pupils arrive after the registers close so they attend but are not registered. With 97% attendance in some recent weeks, the positive impact made by the family support advisor is evident with some reduction in the number of persistent absentees. Attendance has met the local authority target of 95% for most weeks of this academic year but it is slightly lower overall for the reasons described above and because some families take children on holidays at the beginning or end of terms.

Attainment in writing has improved since the previous inspection. More imaginative teaching is helping pupils to write more creatively. Pupils write at greater length in other subjects, for example on candles and the Fire of London in Key Stage 1 or an Anglo-Saxon feasts and Henry VIII in Key Stage 2. The school's own information and lesson observations confirm that more Year 6 pupils are likely to attain the expected, and the higher, levels this year. A handwriting scheme is beginning to make a difference as well. As no two year groups are the same, the headteacher is ensuring that teachers assess standards regularly so that pupils make equally good progress in reading and writing.

The quality of marking has improved and pupils find the recently introduced policy helpful. Its effectiveness depends on how well teachers explain what would make pupils' work better and whether they give pupils time to consider and respond to their comments. When teachers write the same observation two or three times over several weeks, it suggests that more discussion was needed about what would make the work better.

To improve outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage recently appointed staff have been supported effectively. Written observations are used effectively to plan pupils' work and to decide on the best groupings for work. For example, four Reception-age children at the same stage of letter formation worked with the teacher while she kept an eye on two, confident girls writing words on a board; all improved their letters. The Nursery teacher, knowing what children find difficult, increased a child's number confidence by one-to-one, gentle encouragement; others, with a support assistant, threw dice and counted dots on large ladybirds drawn on the playground. The folders containing observations on children's progress are large and divided into the six early learning goals; an overview of each child is not immediately clear, although the staff certainly know them well. Reception and Nursery now have stimulating displays and activity areas both indoors and outside, except for the book corners which do not nurture a love of reading. All children were fully engaged in learning during the visit at the same time as enjoying themselves on computers, practising writing or having fun outdoors with ramps, water and sand. Only a few children wore caps in the hot spring sunshine.

Close to the end of your second year you have rightly identified the need to bring Nursery and Reception classes physically closer because children and staff will benefit by working together sometimes. You have improved assessment, data analysis and monitoring and raised achievement. These have been supported by realistic insight into the quality of pupils' learning, which is now good overall, and what skills teachers have to share with each other. The school's realistic self-evaluation and reflection on what works well and what works less well has helped guide more improvement. The helpful support and advice offered by the London Diocesan Board, the local authority and the School Improvement Partner have contributed to the school's improving 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

Clare Gillies

Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2010

- Raise attendance levels to meet the local authority target of 95% by the end of the summer term 2010 by:
 - working effectively with parents to emphasise the benefits of their children's daily attendance on their learning.
- Improve attainment in writing by:
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to write at length in subjects other than English
 - making clear to pupils through helpful comments in marking how they can improve their writing.
- Improve the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - increasing the use of observations of children's progress to plan the next steps in their learning
 - providing a greater range of stimulating activities to engage children in positive learning.