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9 December 2011

Mr Taylor  
Headteacher  
Wakefield St Marys Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School  
Charles Street  
Wakefield  
West Yorkshire  
WF1 4PE

Dear Mr Taylor

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Wakefield St Marys Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 7 December 2011, 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, your local authority link adviser and the Chair of the Governing Body.

As a result of the inspection on 1 July 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 satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Since the last inspection the school has experienced a number of changes. The pupil roll has increased and there are a larger proportion of pupils who are new to learning English. Recent staff changes have included the appointment of a new deputy headteacher from the start of the autumn term. Staffing in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been adversely affected by long-term absence which has led to a series of temporary appointments over the last year.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, beyond the school's control, improvements to the Early Years Foundation Stage have not proceeded as planned. Despite their best efforts, the school has been unable to secure a permanent, full-time member of staff to take on the leadership role in the Early Years Foundation Stage. An interim arrangement until a substantive appointment is made has brought about the much needed stability to the leadership. With mentoring support, brokered through the local authority, the interim leader works with a senior leader from a school identified with outstanding practice in Early Years. After a shaky start, this support is back on track to continue on a more regular basis next term. All staff have a clearer understanding of their role and there is closer working between the two classes in the Foundation Stage unit. Regular monitoring of children's progress as

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well as lesson observations are beginning to hold teachers to account for the progress made by the children they teach. There are plans for this level of accountability to be extended to the support staff in the Early Years unit. Assessments are accurate and are increasingly used to inform activities appropriately matched to the children's identified needs and interests. Information on children's progress is analysed thoroughly ensuring that those starting school after the autumn term are not disadvantaged and appropriate intervention is put in place where gaps emerge. It is only recently that leaders have been in a strong enough position to tackle some of the deep-seated weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Governors are underway with arrangements to recruit a substantive leader in the spring term. While there are clear indications that efforts are beginning to bear fruit it is too early to have had a demonstrable impact on the full range of provision and outcomes for the children.

Indications from the school's recently developed pupil tracking systems are that; overall, pupils are now making better rates of progress than they were at the last inspection. Better progress is evident in mathematics but progress is less marked in English throughout the school. Indications from unvalidated national test results for pupils in Year 6 this summer reveal more pupils achieving their potential. However, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 remains low. Pupils' achievement in mathematics has improved as a direct result of strong leadership of the subject by the recently appointed deputy headteacher. She has driven improvements which include a focus on ensuring the consistency of teaching, the more effective use of practical mathematical resources and rigorous tracking of pupils' progress. Where weaknesses in teaching and learning are identified the school is able to put in place support for individual teachers. To this end, the deputy headteacher's effective classroom practice guides those requiring support to improve. It is clear that the school has made good progress in tackling weaknesses in mathematics identified at the last inspection.

A review of the curriculum has resulted in improvements already evident in classroom provision. Pupils are provided with increased opportunities to use their learning across a range of subjects. For example, a Year 4 class took delight in consolidating their learning about fractions by using their knowledge to cook and divide pizzas to exact proportions so that they could be divided equally among the pupils and staff. Better provision of good quality resources enables pupils to explore their learning in practical ways. The more creative curriculum is increasing pupils' enjoyment and independence in learning, although the impact on raising their levels of attainment is only just beginning, particularly in Key Stage 1.

A combination of the resolve of the recently appointed deputy headteacher, working closely with the headteacher and very recent developments in tackling weaknesses indicate that the school currently demonstrates a better capacity to bring about the remaining improvements required.

This monitoring inspection included a check on the school's safeguarding procedures and found them to be secure and meeting current requirements.

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

Yours sincerely

James Kilner  
Her Majesty's Inspector

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in July 2010**

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise children's attainment in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
  - providing regular training for all staff so that they thoroughly understand their role
  - improving the day-to-day organisation and ensuring all staff are well deployed
  - improving the quality of assessment and using the outcomes to match tasks to children's needs and interests
  - improving the leadership and management so that key priorities are tackled and changes are monitored and evaluated
  - ensuring that groups of children that start in the spring and summer terms do as well as those who start in the autumn term.
  
- Raise standards in mathematics by:
  - ensuring that all teaching is at least good so that pupils learn more rapidly
  - providing pupils with more opportunities to apply their learning to solve problems.
  
- Ensure that the curriculum at Key Stage 1 meets the needs of pupils by:
  - structuring it to develop pupils' independence
  - ensuring it fully matches pupils' developing academic and social needs
  - increasing the range, quantity and use of practical resources.