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Ronald Johnson  
Headteacher  
Hertford St Andrew CofE Primary School  
Calton Avenue  
Hertford  
SG14 2EP

Dear Mr Johnson

### **Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Hertford St Andrew CofE Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 4 December 2012, and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the Chair of the Governing Body and the representative of the local authority who spoke with me during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to your pupils who talked to me about their work when I visited classes.

Since the previous inspection, the deputy headteacher has left the school and an internally appointed deputy headteacher has taken up post.

As a result of the inspection on 1 May 2012, 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 is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising pupils' achievement.

Leaders have established a system that enables them to track pupils' progress against National Curriculum levels. Information about pupils' achievement is being used with increasing confidence to identify trends and plan improvements. Different groups of pupils are being monitored more carefully. Underachievement is being picked up more quickly and discussed at half-termly meetings between senior leaders and class teachers.

Achievement rose last year. Last year's leavers made good progress to reach broadly average standards of attainment. Pupils in the current Year 6 have some ground to make up if they are to achieve in line with last year's cohort. The school has detailed

information about the attainment of these pupils. This means that leaders and teachers know which pupils need to make faster progress.

Governors are receiving more detailed information about the performance of pupils. Governors have had training from the local authority on how to interpret data, and they are beginning to make sense of and use the information that is presented. Governors are starting to ask increasingly challenging questions of senior leaders and their confidence is growing when seeking clarification or challenging a perspective.

Attendance has improved considerably. The school tracks patterns in attendance carefully. The school is much quicker to communicate with parents and carers about the importance of good attendance. Poor attendance is chased up more rapidly and tenaciously. The school is much better at analysing data around attendance and this has identified that pupils who received free school meals and girls were more likely to miss more school. Having this information has allowed the school to monitor the impact of their actions in improving attendance for these groups. Attendance is now broadly in line for different groups. The gaps have been closed and the number of pupils who are persistently absent has been reduced.

Teachers in most classes are matching work more closely to different pupils' academic needs. In the best lessons, teachers are identifying the targets each pupil needs to work on in that lesson. Teachers are getting better at providing different activities for pupils working at different levels. This is having a positive impact in the teaching of phonics, where pupils are being taught in groups determined by their current levels of attainment. The teaching of the sounds that letters make (phonics) is improving. The school has bought new resources to support teachers in delivering daily phonics sessions. Teachers and teaching assistants have been trained by the local authority in the delivery of these sessions and their skills are growing. Some teachers are very skilled and accurate in teaching phonics but some make small errors that limit learning. The school has decided to use real books in some phonics sessions and these sessions work well when the teacher focuses on developing pupils' understanding of the sounds that letters make. However, some lessons are not sharply enough focused on developing these skills because teachers focus too much on asking questions about comprehension or encouraging pupils to use pictures as a clue to what words might be. The leader with responsibility for phonics has a good understanding of what needs to happen. She has not recently monitored the work of other teachers and, consequently, has not been able to provide the guidance needed to tweak individual teachers' performance.

Marking is improving, with teachers more closely following the school's new policy. Teachers mark work regularly and provide opportunities for pupils to correct technical mistakes in their work, such as spelling and grammar. Leaders have identified the need to improve this further so that teachers regularly provide opportunities for pupils to improve the quality of their work, particularly in writing.

Systems to ensure that pupils remain safe have been tightened. School staff and governors have all completed the necessary training and safeguards have been put in place by the governors to ensure that essential training is not allowed to expire unnoticed in the future. The school maintains an up-to-date record of checks that have taken place for staff and this shows that the appropriate checks have been completed. Governors discuss safeguarding at meetings and make timely checks on the school building. However, there are aspects of the school's security that remain weak and these have gone unnoticed by governors and leaders until pointed out by HMI. It is essential that immediate work takes place to ensure that the building and playground remain secure during the school day.

The local authority has prepared a statement of action that is fit for purpose. They have provided expertise and support to the school through consultants and advisers, who have ensured that the school's systems are appropriate. Training has been provided for teachers and this is having an impact on improving their practice.

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

Michael Sheridan  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2012

- By the end of the summer term 2012, make certain that systems and procedures for safeguarding pupils fully meet statutory requirements by ensuring that:
  - all staff, including those with particular responsibilities for child protection, receive up-to-date training
  - school leaders and the governing body closely monitor the implementation and effectiveness of safeguarding policies.
  
- By the start of the autumn term 2012, establish effective systems for tracking and monitoring the achievement of individuals and groups of pupils in order to provide staff and the governing body with a detailed and accurate view of attainment and progress across the school.
  
- Improve achievement for all groups of pupils by ensuring that:
  - all teachers use assessment information to tailor work closely to pupils' needs and ability levels
  - teachers' written feedback and marking make clear to pupils precisely what they need to do to improve
  - pupils are given time to read and respond to teachers' guidance in marking and feedback
  - staff build on their work to reduce avoidable absence, especially among those pupils whose attendance is erratic.
  
- Accelerate pupils' progress in reading by ensuring, through focused training, that teachers pay sufficient attention to developing pupils' skills in reinforcing the links between letters and the sounds they make.