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14 November 2013

Christine Easton  
Headteacher  
St Mary's Island Church of England (Aided) Primary School  
Island Way West  
Chatham  
ME4 3ST

Dear Mrs Easton

**Special measures monitoring inspection of St Mary's Island Church of England (Aided) Primary School**

Following my visit with Bill James, additional inspector, to your school on 12 and 13 November 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2012. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Medway and the Diocese of Rochester.

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Eradicate inadequate teaching and significantly increase the proportion of good or better teaching by ensuring that:
  - teachers' subject knowledge is good and that training is provided for teachers and teaching assistants to keep them up-to-date, particularly in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics
  - teachers plan lessons that are tailored to meet the different needs and abilities of all pupils
  - teachers keep a close check on the progress of all pupils in lessons, ensuring that they deal with any misunderstanding quickly
  - marking and feedback to pupils are accurate, provide clear guidance about how to improve and identify the next steps in pupils' learning
  - time is provided for pupils to correct their work
  - lessons actively engage and interest all pupils
  - teaching assistants are deployed so that they support the learning of all pupils.
  
- Improve the achievement of all pupils, ensuring that more pupils reach the higher levels in writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1, and that pupils make at least expected progress in English and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2, by:
  - agreeing a systematic approach to the teaching of reading and writing, including the use of synthetic phonics (letters and sounds) and monitoring its impact on pupils' spelling
  - making sure teachers use the outcomes of assessments to set challenging and achievable targets for all pupils
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills and knowledge.
  
- Improve the ability of leaders and the governing body to sustain improvement by ensuring that:
  - provision for pupils, and particularly the quality of teaching, is rigorously monitored and robustly evaluated against the Teachers' Standards and through appraisal and performance management, so that teachers are held to account for pupils' achievement
  - regular and robust analysis of information about pupils' achievement is undertaken to find out how well all groups are making progress, and that plans for improvement are adapted accordingly
  - there is a sharply focused approach to improving teaching and learning through a programme of effective training and the sharing of good practice

- the newly appointed middle leaders have the knowledge and skills to lead and manage their areas effectively, and are given the responsibility and time to do so
- improvement plans include clear and specific indicators so that success can be easily measured.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 12 and 13 November 2013**

### **Evidence**

The inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and examples of pupils' work, and observed 16 lessons and two small-group support activities, including four joint observations conducted with either the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Discussions were held with the headteacher, a group of teachers, the special educational needs coordinator, a representative from the local authority, and the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors. Informal conversations were held with pupils to discuss their work.

### **Context**

Since the previous visit in May 2013, four new teachers have been appointed and three teachers have left the school. A deputy headteacher has also been appointed.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Close scrutiny of pupils' work and analysis of the school's assessment information show that progress has continued to accelerate. Evidence of rapid progress can be seen in English and more pupils are on track to achieve the higher levels in this subject. Despite overall improvement in English, there remain weaknesses in writing, particularly in the middle part of the school. Staff are working hard to promote improvements in writing and senior leaders recognise that this remains a priority. Progress is evident in mathematics, but it has not been so rapid and the rates of progress across classes are more uneven. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress, and outcomes for these pupils are generally higher than that of similar groups nationally. The achievement gaps between most of the different groups of pupils have closed. However, the exception is the gap between boys and girls, which remains too wide and is not closing fast enough. Pupils' responses in lessons show their increasing confidence and improved attitudes to learning.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching has continued to improve. There has been a strong focus on improving marking and the quality of feedback that pupils receive. Most pupils receive helpful feedback from teachers and planned time in lessons to review and improve their work. In the increasing proportion of good or better lessons, teachers involve pupils in making decisions about their own progress and identifying what they need to do to make the next steps in their learning. The progress that pupils make is reviewed regularly and teachers are making accurate judgements about the levels that pupils are working at. Most use this information to plan interesting and engaging lessons that are pitched at the right level to enable good learning. Teaching assistants are

deployed more effectively and they work closely with class teachers to plan and deliver lessons that use their time effectively. In some lessons, pupils have good opportunities to use and apply the mathematics they have learned, but activities are sometimes uninspiring and not based on realistic practical problems that pupils might encounter. In the few weaker lessons, teachers do not plan tasks and activities that meet the needs of the different groups of pupils well enough and the most able are not challenged sufficiently. In these lessons, strategies to engage pupils are not effective and teachers do not check for misconceptions and signs of a lack of progress often enough.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Behaviour continues to be good. Attendance is above average and has improved further since the previous visit. Most pupils have appropriate attitudes to learning and this makes a positive contribution to their increased rates of progress. Pupils are caring and they were observed to show respect and courtesy towards others. For example, when a pupil fell over in the playground, other pupils quickly offered aid and comfort.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

Senior staff and governors monitor the work of the school closely. There is now a detailed analysis of progress against each of the areas for improvement. They can demonstrate that good progress has been made in addressing most of the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2012. Teachers are challenged and supported to improve their practice and the impact can be seen in the improving profile of teaching across the school. Teachers have had opportunities to participate in useful training and have been able to share ideas and learn from each other. Staff who spoke with inspectors felt that their training needs were being met well. Joint observations of lessons conducted with the headteacher and deputy headteacher showed that these senior leaders had an accurate view of the lessons that were observed and were able to identify the particular strengths and weaknesses in the teaching that was seen. Leaders and managers are aware of what is working well and what needs further attention. Planning for improvement identifies appropriate priorities that are likely to enable the school to continue to improve rapidly. Arrangements for recruiting staff have ensured that the necessary checks have been conducted on their suitability to work with children and records are maintained diligently.

### **External support**

The local authority has continued to support the school and local authority officers contribute to the school's evaluation of the implementation of its improvement plan. Consultants have supported the improvements to the teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) and reading and have assisted the school in introducing a new

mathematics project. Local authority personnel have supported staff in moderating pupils' work and have helped the school to network with other schools to share good practice. The local authority judges that the school no longer requires intensive support because it now has greater capacity for self-improvement. This view is supported by the inspection evidence.