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7 February 2014

Mrs Michaela Underwood  
Headteacher  
Great Marsden St John's Church of England Primary School  
Trent Road  
Nelson  
Lancashire  
BB9 0NX

Dear Mrs Underwood

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Great Marsden St John's Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 6 February 2014, 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2013.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and the executive headteacher who is supporting the school one day per week. In addition, the inspector met with representatives of the local authority and diocese and a group of eight pupils. A telephone discussion was held with the Chair of the Governing Body. A range of documentation was scrutinised and the local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plans were evaluated. The inspector also toured the school and took into account the response from 12 parents via Parent View.

## **Context**

A new headteacher has been appointed and took up post in January 2014. The executive headteacher who was working with the school at the time it was placed into special measures is supporting the school one day a week.

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

The new headteacher has hit the ground running. In such a short time in post she has gained the confidence of pupils and senior leaders. Pupils spoken with were, for example, very positive about the changes to reward good behaviour. Senior leaders are fully aware of their shared role in bringing about improvement: they know what is expected of them and are confident they are being equipped with the skills to make a difference to outcomes pupils attain. While numbers responding to Parent View are small, the proportion of parents satisfied with the quality of leadership in the school is higher now than during the year 2012/13.

The local authority and diocese know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. Because of this, they continue to be proactive in their support and challenge for the school. Buoyed by this good support and challenge, and that from the executive headteacher, the headteacher and senior leaders have put clear plans into place to address the weaknesses in the school. These plans, like the local authority's statement of action, are paced well to allow for actions to be put into place and evaluated. While there is much to be achieved, the plans do not overburden leaders and allow them to focus on the most important areas to improve. A number of evaluations have been completed by senior leaders already, informing them that some staff are not consistent in following agreed policy, the checking that pupils are completing corrections in their work, for example. The evaluations of senior leaders, however, do not give specific information where continued strengths and weaknesses lie.

The headteacher, in conjunction with the local authority, has carried out a wide scrutiny of the quality of teaching and learning, including observations of lessons taught by all teachers. Records of these observations show clearly current strengths and weaknesses in teaching. They do not, however, give examples of how pupils are learning as a result of the teaching.

Governors are demonstrating their continued commitment to the school. A review of governance is scheduled to take place at the end of February 2014. A number of governors, including the Chair, are meeting regularly with the headteacher, local authority and diocese as a standards and effectiveness committee. These meetings are developing governors' understanding of what the school needs to do to improve. The Chair of the Governing Body is knowledgeable, for example, about the improvement pupils with special educational needs must make. In addition, the setting of targets for the headteacher's performance management has taken place in a most timely fashion. These, rightly, focus on the improved performance of pupils.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plans are fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Interim Executive Director for Children & Young People for Lancashire and the Diocese of Blackburn. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Williams

**Her Majesty's Inspector**