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17 November 2014

Rachael Howe  
Acting Headteacher  
St Mary's Church of England Primary School  
Dellsome Lane  
North Mymms  
Hatfield  
AL9 7NE

Dear Mrs Howe

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 14 November 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in July 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- regularly evaluate the impact of your school improvement plan, and identify in your English and mathematics action plans how you intend to measure the success of your proposed actions
- establish systems for holding subject leaders to account
- ensure members of the governing body provide an appropriate degree of challenge.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, pupils, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a consultant headteacher to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan. We visited every class to observe children at work and to look at their books. I also scrutinised the school's records of recruitment checks on staff.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection the substantive headteacher has gone on maternity leave and you became acting headteacher at the start of November 2014. A consultant headteacher from a local school is offering guidance to support both you and the Chair of the Governing Body.

## **Main findings**

School leaders, teachers, members of support staff and members of the governing body contributed towards producing the school improvement plan. This has given them ownership of the plan and made clear everyone's role in driving school improvement. The plan identifies appropriate actions which address the school's weaknesses and it is clear when you aim to measure the success of actions taken throughout the year. However, you have not met the first deadline for this process. Separate action plans have been written for English, mathematics and science. The plans for English and mathematics do not indicate how you will measure the success of actions taken.

The school has brokered the support of an experienced local consultant headteacher who spends two days per week in the school. The consultant headteacher has already spent time in the school visiting lessons to identify strengths in the quality of teaching and what needs to improve. This visit was followed up by detailed notes and further points for action. The professional development of all staff in the school rightly continues to be a priority for you. For example, the consultant headteacher has plans in place to train midday supervisory assistants so that fully understand the role they have in supporting pupils to make school an enjoyable experience.

Due to the small size of the school, all class teachers also have a subject leadership responsibility. This is good professional development for these colleagues. However, although all class teachers attend progress meetings for the classes they teach, there are no formal arrangements for holding these colleagues to account.

The quality of teaching over time has been too variable in the past. However, staffing is now more stable and you are using a range of activities to build up a more accurate profile of the quality of teaching in the school. These include: observations of lessons, scrutiny of pupils' books and analysing pupils' outcomes. My scrutiny of books shows that teachers' marking is helping pupils to understand how they can

improve the quality of their work and therefore make better progress. In many cases, pupils respond to their teachers' comments. Teachers are making work more challenging when planning their lessons and have become better at adapting the work to meet pupils' needs.

Through the support of the consultant headteacher, governors are strengthening their monitoring role by establishing links with subject areas. Although visits to the school have taken place in the past, the revised system introduces more rigour and focus. However, governors are not yet providing sufficient challenge to school leaders regarding how they are improving the school.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

Relationships between the school and the local authority have strengthened recently. This is important as some senior leaders are relatively new to their post and require support. The local authority has contributed towards the funding of a school support package and has provided additional guidance through the use of consultants in English and mathematics. They facilitated the support of the local consultant headteacher who provides a wide range of expertise and good practice.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Hertfordshire and the Diocese of St Albans.

Yours sincerely

John Daniell  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**