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20 March 2015

Mr Bennett and Mrs Taylor  
Executive Headteacher and Head of School  
St John's Church of England Primary School  
Peel Grove  
London  
E2 9LR

Dear Mr Bennett and Mrs Taylor

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

Following my visit to your school on Friday 20 March 2015, 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 September 2012. 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.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher and head of school and other senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, two representatives from the local authority and, the school council. A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the London Diocesan Board to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The following documents were evaluated: the raising achievement plan, tracking information on pupils' progress, minutes of governors' meetings, a sample of pupils' books, performance management information, and support plan for staff and, minutes of the local authority's Targeted Intervention Group meetings.

## **Context**

Since the inspection, the school staff and numbers of pupils on roll have remained stable. The school has federated with St Paul's Church of England Primary School, the outstanding partner school. The Interim Executive Board (IEB) has been dissolved. Both schools now share one governing body which includes two members of the former IEB to ensure continuity. The executive headteacher works on the strategic vision for the school while the head of school focuses on the day-to-day management. She also has overall responsibility for developing the quality of teaching and the English curriculum.

## **Main findings**

My short tour of lessons with the head of school and scrutiny of books, confirmed that actions to develop teaching is underway. All of your colleagues that I interviewed expressed their confidence in you and the head of school in driving changes quickly to improve pupils' performance. Pupils from different ability groups told me that they are given challenging work which is making them 'resilient in preparing for secondary school and their future working life'. This mature view supports your comments that teaching is much improved. This is linked to the increased focus on expectations, monitoring, training and structured planning to meet the needs of pupils. You reported that teachers are more accountable for pupils' progress. You indicated that this is being achieved through progress meetings, observation of teaching, including short visits to lessons and regular analysis of pupils' performance. Observation records however do not emphasise the impact of teaching on learning. The range of support available for staff is contributing to you driving improvement; this was evident in the example of the support plan seen and in my discussion with middle leaders and representatives from the local authority.

You have increased the capacity of the leadership team by appointing key staff to strategic positions. They said that you had 'brought the school to life' and elicited their loyalty commitment to improving the school. Their action plans and summaries of their day-to-day work in developing the curriculum, supporting staff and monitoring of pupils' work show that they have a clear grasp of the tasks to improve the effectiveness of the school. You are both enabling them to develop their skills. As a result, the middle leaders also indicated that they are more sure-footed about their work. This is because of the training and support provided by the local authority and the diocese as well as the strong partnership work with St Paul's Primary School. Nevertheless, you are all aware that not all middle leaders are fully equipped to carry out formal observation of teaching.

The raising achievement plan (RAP) provides a sharp focus on the areas for improvement. The correlation between the actions and outcomes are linked to a clear time-frame. Responsibility for evaluating the work goes beyond senior staff. However, measureable success criteria, although mentioned and recorded

elsewhere, have not been incorporated into the plan. Your practical approach to implementing the plan is evident and well-illustrated in, for example, two ways. First, the deployment of adults in Year 6 to ensure that teaching is targeted and focused on the needs of different groups of pupils in literacy and numeracy. Second, you have started to involve pupils in developing teaching. This is at the early stage of development.

As at the previous inspection, the governing body remains in full control of monitoring the school's work. Governors are clear about the strategic priorities and expressed their determination for the school to move quickly from the current grade 3 overall judgement. The urgency of their ambition to improve the school further was expressed when they talked about how they monitor and set targets with you both. Governors are using their professional expertise to triangulate evidence when holding you both and other leaders to account for pupils' progress. They appreciate the local authority's support and recognise that you and your staff have moved the school forward since the last inspection.

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**

The local authority works well with the school but its involvement is much reduced to being 'light touch'. This is because officers recognise the improvements made in developing the capacity of other leaders to manage their responsibilities without constant supervision from a distance. This level of trust is combined with confidence in the work you are both doing. Additionally, the local authority's exit strategy is already in place. This includes providing training and support as needed, while challenging you both and other leaders about pupils' achievement through the regular targeted intervention group meetings.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Tower Hamlets and as below.

Yours sincerely

Carmen Rodney  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**