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29 November 2007

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

Dear Mrs Fitzpatrick

### SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF GREAT MARSDEN ST JOHN'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Allan Torr HMI to your school on 27-28 November 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2006. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures - satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection - satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, Blackburn Diocese, and the Director of Education and Standards at Lancashire County Council.

Yours sincerely

Garry Jones  
H M Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF GREAT MARSDEN ST JOHN'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 27-28 November 2007

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. They met with the headteacher, other members of staff, a group of pupils, the chair of governors, a representative from the diocese and representatives from the local authority

### Context

There have been significant changes to the teaching staff since the previous monitoring inspection. Two new members of staff have been appointed to teaching and learning responsibility posts and one class teacher to a temporary contract. In addition, a member of staff is on long-term absence due to ill health and this post is being covered by a supply teacher.

### Achievement and standards

Standards overall are below average. Pupils in the Foundation Stage are beginning to make good progress in developing skills and are settling well into school routines. In 2007 overall standards at the end of Key Stage 1 declined slightly. The standards in writing fell significantly and were exceptionally low. The attainment of boys was a particular weakness. However, standards in mathematics rose to above the national average.

In the national tests, at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2007, overall standards improved to just below the national average. The results in mathematics improved significantly to exceed the national average. Although, the standards in science improved they remained below the national average. Standards in English declined to the lowest in five years. The achievement of pupils in Year 6 was satisfactory overall.

The school's own analysis of pupils' progress in English and mathematics at the end of 2007 showed that the percentage of pupils on track to attain the level expected of pupils at their ages varied considerably between different classes. Progress was inconsistent and overall was too slow. Internal assessment data and a review of pupils' work show that progress continues to be inconsistent between classes and between subjects. Progress is particularly weak in writing.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2006:

- Raise standards and increase pupils' progress, especially in mathematics and science - unsatisfactory

### Personal development and well-being

The strengths identified at the previous inspection have been maintained. Pupils' behaviour is good overall. Pupils report that incidents of bullying, name-calling and

harassment have declined and that, on the few occasions when incidents occur, they are tackled effectively. Around school pupils are courteous, respectful and confident. They are enthusiastic about their roles in the school community, for example, as house captains, monitors, school councillors or in contributing to the forthcoming Christmas Fair.

### Quality of provision

Initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning have begun to have a positive effect. Teachers plan well-structured lessons and there is an increased proportion of satisfactory and good teaching. In the most effective lessons a range of well planned activities with precise learning objectives and high teacher expectations result in a brisk pace and pupils' make good progress. Teachers make good use of a range of resources, including interactive whiteboards, practical equipment and the classroom environment to stimulate learning. As a result, standards are improving and the progress which pupils make in lessons has accelerated. However, this is not yet consistent across all year groups or lessons. A proportion of the teaching is still unsatisfactory. In the unsatisfactory lessons the planned activities did not provide appropriate challenge for all pupils and the focus of learning was insufficiently clear. As a result the pace of learning was too slow and progress was inadequate

There is too much teaching that is simply satisfactory. Although, learning objectives are always shared with pupils, in some lessons some pupils remain unclear about exactly what they are expected to learn. In other lessons the range of planned activities does not always sufficiently match the needs of all pupils, or an over-reliance on published schemes of work results in teachers not focusing sufficiently on extending the learning of pupils. In English, insufficient attention is being paid to developing the structure of pupils' writing and to providing more opportunities for extended writing. These weaknesses prevent pupils making the good progress that is required if they are to remedy the underachievement of previous years. Marking is regular and the revised marking policy supports improvement, but is not yet sufficiently embedded in practice. Insufficient use is made of marking to provide clear advice to pupils on how to improve their work.

Teachers' relationships with pupils are good. Their caring and helpful approach encourages pupils to behave well and to learn. In lessons pupils are generally attentive; however, in a small number of lessons pupils become restless and noisy. This is when the pace of learning is slow and expectations of behaviour have not been made sufficiently clear.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2006:

- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that all learners are appropriately challenged through tasks which allow them to build systematically on previous learning – satisfactory

## Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the school have been strengthened since the previous inspection. The appointment of two staff with responsibility allowances has broadened and strengthened the leadership team. The headteacher continues to work hard to bring about improvement and is well supported by the deputy headteacher. The school's self-evaluation document has been reviewed and is a more accurate analysis of the school. It remains too descriptive and does not focus sufficiently on providing evidence to support judgements. The headteacher has worked with the local authority to address a number of difficult staffing issues in order to ensure continuity of teaching.

Monitoring of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress has been intensified. Observation of teaching has produced clear judgements on the quality of teaching and advice on areas of improvement for staff. However, there is insufficient focus on evaluating pupils' progress in the records of observation. Where necessary support programmes for staff have been put in place. In addition there is a regular review of teachers' planning and a scrutiny of pupils' work in English and mathematics to identify areas for improvement. Until recently the areas for development identified through this extensive programme of monitoring had not been systematically reviewed to inform planning for improvement. This task has now been completed and the headteacher has accurately identified the key priorities for improvement. However, the action plan has not been revised to address these areas for development.

The role of subject leaders continues to develop and they are involved in reviewing planning and monitoring standards of work and teaching. This is giving them a key role in supporting developments through peer coaching. The coordination of English by a temporary member of staff is a potential weakness in ensuring continuity of leadership. Subject leaders show strong commitment to driving up standards.

The school has established a system to track progress in English and mathematics at the end of each term. This has already identified groups of pupils that are underachieving and where necessary strategies to improve progress have been introduced to support these pupils. The effect of this work on progress has yet to be fully evaluated.

The governing body has been strengthened by the appointment of two additional governors by the local authority and the diocese. The governors have undertaken regular training to further develop their skills and are beginning to take on the role of a 'critical friend', although this remains at an early stage of development. Governors' awareness of the areas for development is improving. They are realistic about the challenges that the school faces, but are committed to bringing about improvement.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2006:

- Monitor the school's performance more accurately and critically, using the findings to improve self-evaluation and raise standards – satisfactory

#### External support

The local authority has continued to provide a range of training to the school which has improved the quality of teaching, although not yet consistently. In addition, support provided by advisers to subject coordinators on their monitoring role has been welcomed and has improved this work. However, the school reports that the effectiveness of some training has been limited by not having sufficient time for improvements to become embedded before the next initiative is introduced. The monitoring and intervention team adviser and associate headteacher adviser have provided valued support and guidance to the leadership team. However, the absence of the personal support of a mentor for the headteacher is a weakness.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the standards of writing are improved across the full curriculum.
- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation leads to a review of the action plan.