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28 March 2008

Mrs Liz Townend  
Associate Headteacher  
Great Marsden St John's Church of England Primary School  
Trent Road  
Nelson  
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BB9 0NX

Dear Mrs Townend

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

Following my visit with Barbara Hollingworth Additional Inspector and Angela Milner HMI to your school on 26 and 27 March 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third 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  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 26 and 27 March 2008

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the associate headteacher, other members of staff, a group of pupils, the chair of governors, a parent governor, a representative from the local authority (LA) and a representative of the diocese.

### Context

The headteacher has been absent since the start of the present term and is shortly to begin a phased return to her role. An associate headteacher has led the school since the second week in January. One teacher, who has been absent for some time, has recently resigned and the vacant post has been advertised. There are currently a further two teachers on long term absence.

### Achievement and standards

Standards in mathematics are now higher than those in reading and writing throughout the school and more pupils are making satisfactory progress. The quality of work in Year 6 shows that there is an increased proportion of pupils working at the higher Level 5 measure of attainment and targeted group work is raising the standards of those pupils close to reaching the nationally expected Level 4 in all subjects.

The school's records show that the rate of pupils' progress is quicker in mathematics and reading than it is in writing, though work in pupils' books shows that the quality of writing is generally improving. More opportunities to write at length in different subjects enable the pupils to practise their skills in a range of contexts, but these developments are still at an early stage. The impact of the more effective marking of writing can clearly be seen, but presentation and technical accuracy are still weak in some classes.

Pupils are developing their knowledge of basic number facts well and their ability to apply these to solve problems is improving. In science, there is an emphasis on providing pupils with more investigative opportunities and the pupils in Year 6 demonstrated that they are capable of recording their observations accurately and independently.

Within this overall more positive picture, the limited progress of pupils in Years 1 and 3 is a concern. Despite the best efforts of temporary teachers, progress is not good enough to eradicate the underachievement which exists in these year groups and progress for many pupils stalls.

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

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

### Personal development and well-being

Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good. Most pupils are keen to do their best and they concentrate well in lessons. They clearly enjoy school and enjoy working together in pairs and in larger groups. The competitive spirit generated in the Year 4/5 Soccer Academy literacy lesson encouraged effective team working and a pride in doing well. However, in the two classes affected by staff absence attitudes are not as positive and some pupils find it hard to settle to work and to respond to instructions immediately. Despite this, pupils talk readily to visitors about their work and show a degree of pride in their school and what it has to offer.

Relationships are good between all members of the school community. School councillors were unanimous in saying Great Marsden is a friendly school which welcomes newcomers. They said that there was always an adult to help sort out any problems which may arise. Behaviour is good. Pupils have a secure understanding of their rights and responsibilities and demonstrate this by willingly undertaking tasks around school and by raising money for national and international charities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is also good as was demonstrated in an assembly where they reflected thoughtfully on the Easter story, contributed their ideas and views and celebrated at the end by singing a hymn, tunefully and with feeling.

### Quality of provision

Teaching is satisfactory overall. The proportion of good teaching has increased reflecting the impact of the training and support that the staff have received. However, there remains a proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. In these lessons the work does not sufficiently meet the needs of all the pupils and as a result many pupils do not make sufficient progress. This has been a particular issue in those classes where there have been a number of short-term temporary teachers to cover for long term absence.

In the most effective lessons, teachers have high expectations and plan a good range of activities to ensure that the pace of learning is brisk. In these lessons the planned tasks and the well prepared resources match the abilities of pupils well. This allows pupils of all abilities to make generally good progress. Teachers explain the topics and tasks clearly, demonstrating their good subject knowledge; and use questioning well to check out pupils' understanding and to encourage pupils to think for themselves. In some lessons electronic whiteboards are used well to enrich the learning. Overall the use of information technology by pupils to support their learning is underdeveloped. Pupils facing greater difficulties in learning are supported well by teaching assistants. Marking is regular and there are useful comments to help the pupils to improve their work, however, the correction of basic errors is not always undertaken with sufficient rigour

The features of good teaching are not yet consistently evident in all classes. Planned activities do not always provide an appropriate degree of challenge for all pupils as work is not sufficiently matched to the full range of pupils' abilities. It is not always made sufficiently clear to pupils what they must do to reach their learning objective and how the work will be assessed. In consequence, pupils do not engage with the work sufficiently, the pace of learning slows and pupils make only satisfactory progress.

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 appointment of an associate headteacher to cover the absence of the substantive headteacher has ensured that progress has been maintained. The senior leadership team continues to work hard to bring about improvement. A revised action plan has set clear priorities and progress is regularly reviewed.

The monitoring of teaching has continued with regular observations by the associate head teacher and staff from the local authority. This has provided a clear view of strengths and areas for development and has allowed support and training to be targeted. Planning is monitored on a weekly basis and appropriate guidance is provided to staff when required. A common format for planning has been agreed but this is not yet being consistently used by all staff. A regular review of pupils' work and the collation of assessment data has shown that progress is improving, although not yet consistently in all year groups and across all subjects. This has allowed intervention strategies to be carefully targeted. A range of approaches has been used to collate and analyse progress data and at times these have not been sufficiently well integrated to provide a clear picture.

The role of subject leaders is developing and they are focusing on evaluating provision in core subjects through work scrutiny. This informs regular reports to senior managers and the governing body. However, time constraints are preventing subject leaders from being involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and planning in their subject areas. This limits their overall effectiveness in planning for the development of the subjects.

The governing body is increasingly effective in fulfilling its role. Its composition has been strengthened and it is now proactive in monitoring performance and holding the school to account. The chair of governors has developed his expertise and is taking a key role in driving forward improvement. The role of the link governor for literacy is developing well. An extremely positive development has been a survey of parental views by a recently appointed parent governor. This illustrates that the majority of parents, who responded to the survey, view the school's provision positively.

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 continues to provide a valued range of support and training to the school. However, the impact of this support, although effective, is being limited because insufficient time is allowed for initiatives to become embedded before a new development is introduced. It is intended that when the substantive head returns she will be supported by the associate head as a mentor. This is a positive development if a clearly defined role for the mentor is agreed.

Although the local authority is providing valued support in addressing a number of staffing issues this has not succeeded in ensuring that stable teaching of good quality is available in all classes. The provision of support to governors and senior managers in this area is a matter of great urgency if the progress of the school towards being removed from special measures is to be maintained.

The diocese has contributed well to the development of the governing body.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Embed the ongoing initiatives to increase the proportion of good teaching and improve pupil progress.