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25 November 2010

Mr R White  
Headteacher  
St Paul's Church of England Primary School  
Hornbye Road  
St Leonards-on-Sea  
East Sussex  
TN37 6RT

Dear Mr White

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Paul's Church of England Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when we inspected your school on 18 November 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the Chair of the Governing Body, the representative from the local authority and the leaders who attended meetings, your staff and the pupils.

Since the previous inspection the headteacher has resigned. The school was led by a senior advisory headteacher until February 2010 and an experienced headteacher was seconded until the following July. A new headteacher was appointed at the start of the autumn term in September 2010. Both Key Stage 1 and 2 leaders left during last year, but two new appointments have been made since then. A new deputy headteacher began full time in September 2009.

As a result of restructuring there has been a reduction in administrative and leadership posts and others have been redesignated. A new business manager, special educational needs coordinator, two learning leaders and three newly qualified teachers have been appointed. There is a newly formed leadership team. The governing body has been restructured and a new Chair of the Governing Body appointed. The school roll has increased in the Reception Year, as have the numbers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportions of pupils who join and leave the school, known as pupil mobility, is high and in Year 6 last year only two thirds remained from their start in Reception.

As a result of the inspection on 6–7 May 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement, which are set out in the annex to this letter.



Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The previous inspection indicated that pupils' attainment was starting to rise. Inspection sampling of lessons and the school's rigorous analysis of data and information on pupil's performance confirm this. Pupils' achievement is improving well. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's attainment rose in July 2010 to above national averages in all areas of learning. Boys especially made quicker progress. Though a more-able class, improved teaching, especially in blending letters and sounds, problem solving, reasoning and numeracy, has ensured greater numbers achieve higher than national age-related standards.

The legacy of underachievement is reducing. Pupils' attainment is rising and for many rapidly: it is becoming much closer to expected level. The rising trend in Years 1 and 2 shows significant improvement on that previously. Year 2 pupils made more progress than any other year group from a very low start. In Years 3 to 6 tracking data shows the gap in achievement is narrowing. The current Years 5 and 6 are on track to at least meet the challenging targets set. Progress measures from Year 2 to Year 6 show significant improvement, especially in mathematics. Pupil mobility has a significant detrimental impact on results, but the school can demonstrate that those who remain in the school throughout their education are making faster progress from their starting points. More-able pupils are also doing well, and an increasing number are reaching higher levels of attainment, especially in science.

The pace and challenge of learning in lessons has improved; this is why pupils are motivated and keen to do well. In a Year 5 class, pupils worked productively on a variety of practical tasks to calculate the area of shape and linked this well to their targets. The full impact of improvement is seen in the quality of teaching and learning. A greater proportion of it is good with outstanding teaching on occasions. In well-taught lessons plans are detailed, learning activities are interesting and well-matched to pupils' range of abilities. On occasion work does not meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities well enough, and their concentration wanes. Teacher's questioning skills extend pupils' learning, reducing any misconceptions. Use of talk partners reinforces pupils' confidence to share their ideas and deepen understanding. They like science investigations and fact finding and particularly enjoyed their visit to Herstmonceux Observatory. In 'Bright Sparks', the gifted and talented club, and through the excellence cluster, pupils have joined the British library 'Thinkathon' and learn Latin.

Staff now have accurate data about pupils' performance and have higher expectations of pupils' behaviour and performance. This is driving up the level of challenge and teaching of more complex skills. Pupils told inspectors, 'tasks are more challenging'. Accurate and frequent assessment opportunities and mostly helpful marking ensure they understand what they have achieved and how to improve their work. Occasionally untidy and or unfinished work is accepted. Assessment routines



are being embedded. Pupils know their targets and value the variety used from 'reach for the stars' to 'Toy Story characters' to indicate their progress.

Interesting wall displays celebrate pupil's achievement the best are vibrant and interactive. Resources have improved with more boy-friendly texts and a wider range of exciting mathematical, science and information and communication technology resources. Teachers look for the best strategies to help pupils use and develop their investigational, problem solving and independent learning skills. This is paying off as Year 6, inspired by the book *War of the Worlds*, wrote their own sci-fi extracts, such as, 'Suddenly the robots marched in unison with death in their eyes.' In another Year 6 class, work about the Second World War was enriched by artefacts and displays including huge models of Messerschmitts and spitfires in a 'dog fight' above their heads. The new 'skills-based' curriculum successfully builds on pupils' previous learning and helps them to apply skills learned in different areas through 'learning journeys'. Learning through discovery and play in the Reception Year is extended to Year 1 to help ease transition. The youngest have good opportunities to develop their communication skills, whether writing bear stories or outside in role play dressed as workman directing traffic around cones and barriers they set up because of flooding.

Strong leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteacher is successfully developing the skills of senior and middle leaders. Senior leaders have established rigorous systems to check on pupils' progress and outcomes. Responsibilities are clear and subject and phase leaders know they are accountable for these and the quality of provision. Good monitoring of teaching quality has eliminated any inadequate teaching and it is well focused on the quality of learning rather than just teaching.

The governing body has undertaken training, reformed their committees and individuals are better informed, skilled and focused on priorities to challenge the school. The school's determination to promote equality and opportunity is summed up by the comments from the chair of governors " 'Equality stands in everything we do, not as a bolt-on.' The chair of governors correctly noted the core reason for improvement when commenting, 'At the heart of this is the headteacher who is meticulous and has a holistic approach to moving the school forward now there is learning and laughter.' The firm foundations laid are having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes and provision ensuring a secure capacity to improve.

The good support from the local authority and school improvement partner has enabled the school to develop effective plans for improvement and rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluation of the school's work.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely



Sheila Browning  
Additional Inspector

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2009**

- ■Raise pupils' standards in writing and mathematics from Reception to Year 2, particularly for more capable pupils, and in science throughout the school.
- ■Ensure that teaching and learning are consistently good, especially in providing greater challenge and match of work and more opportunities for pupils to make decisions and solve problems.
- Ensure that monitoring and self-evaluation are rigorous, and management responsibilities are shared evenly between senior leaders.

