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Mrs Pam Randall  
Headteacher  
The Ellis Church of England VA Primary School  
School Street  
Hemingfield  
Barnsley, South Yorkshire  
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Dear Mrs Randall

**Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Ellis Church of England VA Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 11 and 12 January 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly Qualified Teachers may be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Barnsley and the Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Susan Bowles  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2010**

- Raise pupils' attainment and improve their achievement, particularly in the main subjects of English, mathematics and science.
- Improve the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage in raising children's achievement by ensuring that there is appropriate leadership and management of the provision.
- Improve the consistency of teaching so that inadequate teaching is eliminated and the majority of teaching is good or better.
- Improve the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, including governance, in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance to raise pupils' attainment and achievement.
- Promote equality of opportunity and community cohesion more effectively.

## **Special measures: monitoring of The Ellis Church of England VA Primary School**

### **Report from the second monitoring inspection on 11 and 12 January 2011**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and senior leadership team, groups of pupils and staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.

#### **Context**

Staffing is stable. One member of staff has left, but each class continues to be taught by the same teacher as at the last visit.

#### **Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning**

Pupils' progress and enjoyment have continued to improve. In the observed lessons, pupils, in general, engaged well with activities and tried hard. Year 6 pupils spoke about how their confidence is growing as they learn how they can make their work better and see personal improvements. Last year, Year 6 pupils attained results in national tests which were in line with the national average. This represented achievement in line with the national picture and a clear improvement, particularly for boys and in mathematics. All indications are that the current Year 6 will sustain this improvement. A recent survey of parents and carers indicated that the large majority feel their children are making enough progress. The school is working hard to accelerate pupils' progress across the age range, making careful use of assessment. There are early signs of positive impact: by December, all groups of pupils were assessed to be making satisfactory or better progress in English and mathematics. This is reflected in the improving quality of their work since the previous visit.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise pupils' attainment and improve their achievement, particularly in the main subjects of English, mathematics and science – satisfactory.

#### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

As teachers improve the pace of teaching and learning, behaviour in lessons and pupils' ability to work independently has been seen to improve. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children learn to make independent and sensible choices. Relationships between pupils and between adults and pupils are positive across the school. Some individuals who find it difficult to concentrate or cooperate are responding well to sensitive support. Older pupils now have more opportunities for

responsibility and leadership in the school and local community and speak positively about getting involved. Lessons increasingly enable them to apply their skills to topical and global issues which they feel are important. Although few are as yet confident in articulating their views formally, they have begun to develop as reflective and articulate young citizens.

### **The effectiveness of provision**

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved well as the leadership of the deputy headteacher has become fully established. As a result of improved systems for observation and assessment, all staff share a clearer understanding of the needs of the children. Planning takes better account of the children's generally lower-than-typical starting points and expectations are suitably high. Indoors and out, a wider range of materials and activities are used to stimulate children's curiosity to experiment. Adults engage better with children as they play and explore so that they are enriching children's communication skills. The enthusiastic team meets regularly to review children's progress and refine plans. Last year, the proportion of children who reached a good level of achievement was in line with the national average. Currently, assessments indicate that a substantial majority of children are on track to achieve well.

The quality of teaching across the school has also improved well. In the observed lessons teachers applied the school's teaching and learning policy more consistently and confidently than previously, with a better effect on learning. Much teaching showed good qualities. More accurate assessment and careful tracking of pupils' individual progress are helping teachers to identify gaps in learning, set clearer targets and plan more precisely. Teachers are using success criteria to focus their planning and marking and, by sharing the steps to success with pupils, are giving them a clearer sense of direction. While there is scope to refine teachers' modelling and questioning, pupils already show better understanding of the steps they need to take to achieve better. Sometimes they assess their own work and set themselves targets. Teachers have begun to refresh schemes of work so that they have greater relevance and appeal to pupils. Learning proceeds at a more urgent pace and through a wider variety of activities than previously and teaching assistants now make a significant contribution throughout lessons.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage in raising children's achievement by ensuring that there is appropriate leadership and management of the provision – good.
- Improve the consistency of teaching so that inadequate teaching is eliminated and the majority of teaching is good or better – good.

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Since the last visit, the school's senior leaders have formed a coherent team with the confidence to lead improvement. While the local authority has provided support for professional development and independent evaluation, the need for practical help has reduced as the team has become more self-reliant. The improvement plan is clearly focused on the areas identified by the last inspection. Each member of the senior team plays a significant part in implementing the plan and can demonstrate early impact. Through meetings with teachers to moderate assessment and discuss pupils' progress, leaders have focused staff on achieving higher expectations. Focused monitoring has become part of the school's routine and all staff receive helpful guidance. Opportunities to observe practice in each others' classrooms and in other schools have given staff a clearer understanding of effective strategies which all are working hard to apply. Teachers increasingly work in pairs to refine their use of agreed approaches. Reviews draw on a range of evidence to explain what has been achieved and clearly convey the next steps needed. The evidence indicates that the school is on track to meet the targets set.

While progress in this area has generally been strong, improving the effectiveness of governance is progressing more steadily. Members of the governing body are now better organised and equipped to evaluate the school's work. They have begun to use a framework of questions to monitor particular aspects, in order to be able to report to parents on how well policies are being implemented.

Progress on promoting equality and community cohesion is satisfactory. Leaders are alert to slight differences, for example, in the rate of girls' progress in mathematics. No groups of pupils are significantly underachieving, as a result of the general improvements to teaching and learning and careful monitoring and intervention. The plan to prepare pupils better for life as global citizens is unfolding steadily. As they refresh the curriculum, teachers are finding ways to develop relevant knowledge, understanding and skills. For example, pupils understand 'Fair Trade' and empathise with children affected by the earthquake in Haiti. Older pupils are keen to be sports coaches or environmental wardens for their local community. Links to a contrasting school in London are becoming real to pupils in Year 6, who are keen to see beyond differences and find ways to communicate.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, including governance, in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance to raise pupils' attainment and achievement – good
- Promote equality of opportunity and community cohesion more effectively – satisfactory

## **External support**

The local authority has continued to work closely with the school, providing monitoring, professional development and links to other schools. These have had a positive impact on the quality of teaching, assessment and leadership. Leaders at all levels greatly appreciate the support and most staff spoken to referred to some benefit it had given them. Evaluation has been regular and systematic. The authority now sees the school as needing less intensive support, although monitoring and the valued links with the School Improvement Partner, partner school and local networks continue.