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18 February 2011

Mrs Sarr
Headteacher
St Michael's Church of England Primary School
Bounds Green Road
Wood Green
London
N22 8NE

Dear Mrs Sarr

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Michael's Church of England Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 17 February 2011, for the time you gave to our telephone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. I would be grateful if you could also thank members of the governing body, staff and the pupils for the contributions they made.

There have been some changes to the school context since the last inspection. St Michael's is working in close partnership with St Ann's Primary School, through a 'soft federation'. The headteacher of St Ann's is responsible for leading both schools. The deputy headteacher at each school acts as headteacher in her absence.

As a result of the inspection on 22 and 23 September 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.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with well below expected levels of skills but leave the Reception class with broadly average levels in four of the six areas of learning. Their achievement is just below average in mathematical development and communication, language and literacy. Considering their starting points they make good progress. This is an improvement since the time of the last inspection. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 is also improving and over time standards have risen. Although they gained just below average results in 2010, pupils' exit levels from Reception were lower than is evident now so again this



represents good progress. Attainment varies and is better in reading than in writing and mathematics. Pupils' attainment has risen dramatically by the end of Year 6 and is now above the national average in English and is broadly average in mathematics. Particular improvement is evident in the proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 5. Over half the pupils gained Level 5 in English and over a third in mathematics. This is a direct result of the school's actions taken to raise levels of challenge for more able pupils and in improving the quality of teaching. Again, this represents good and in some cases excellent progress in relation to the starting points of the pupils.

The quality of teaching has moved from satisfactory to good and pupils are achieving better as a result. They are clearly engaged and enjoying their lessons. The work and activities provided are usually well matched to pupils' needs. In most lessons pupils of differing abilities tackle different work. During lessons teachers make assessments of how well pupils are doing and either increase or decrease the pace of learning appropriately. Well-targeted questioning in most lessons ensures that pupils are challenged but this is not evident in all lessons. Teaching assistants support learning well and prompt pupils accordingly when they get stuck. Teachers plan lessons carefully and convey learning objectives and targets clearly to the pupils. As a result, pupils are able to articulate what they have learnt and why. Time is built in to review learning. Behaviour in lessons is good because it is well managed. The quality of teaching has improved because the leadership and management of teaching and learning are much more robust. Good quality professional development has ensured that teachers have been able to reflect on their own practice. Staff are being more rigorously held to account for the progress their pupils make through regular progress review meetings which focus closely on raising attainment and accelerating progress.

More able pupils are being catered for more effectively as a result of high expectations and the promotion of independent learning evident in lessons. This is because teachers have clear targets set for individual pupils so that lessons can build more effectively on prior learning. As a result, the school has seen a significant rise in the proportion of pupils attaining above average standards. Through effective training teachers are now more suitably equipped to support and challenge the more able pupils in their class. These pupils now have good opportunities to develop their higher order thinking skills and to use their initiative. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, pupils were engaged in devising a game based on equivalent fractions for Year 6 to play. In a Year 3 lesson pupils excitedly told the inspector about Montezuma and his role in Aztec history while writing a play script. There are also plans in place to introduce a coaching approach to improving teaching further, particularly with reference to more able pupils. In addition, there are new systems in place to monitor and evaluate the attainment and progress of this group.

Effective training has also figured highly in the improvements made to the curriculum. There are many more linked visits and trips which bring topics to life, and the school makes good use of the huge number of opportunities for this in London. A



Year 1 pupil had clearly benefited from her visit to the London Eye which she had written about in literacy. The results of a pupil questionnaire demonstrate pupils' increased levels of enjoyment. The curriculum makes effective links between subjects which enhances pupils' retention of facts and strengthens their understanding by helping them to learn more effectively. In Year 3 pupils learnt about mythical creatures in their literacy lesson and then brought them to life during art. Good practice has been shared across the federation. There has been clear improvement since the time of the last inspection.

The governing body is in a better position to hold the school to account more effectively. It is becoming increasingly effective in its work and continues to develop its skills. Members of the governing body visit the school regularly, have introduced a calendar of monitoring and are allocated specific areas such as safeguarding and special educational needs. The appointment of a link governor for the most able pupils ensures that the governing body keeps abreast of improvements in that area. There is a clearer understanding of what the performance data show and a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of outcomes and provision. However, not all members of the governing body are as familiar as they should be with the process of self-evaluation or target setting and their statutory duty to promote community cohesion.

The executive headteacher and her team are working together very effectively to drive forward improvement still further and are determined that all pupils are given every opportunity to reach their potential. This has paid dividends and is clearly evident in higher levels of attainment and good progress. The school appreciates the valuable support the local authority provides, the help and challenge of the School Improvement Partner and the London Diocesan Board for Schools.

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

Glynis Bradley-Peat
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2009

- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching to accelerate pupils' progress and further raise standards by:
 - increasing the opportunities during lessons for pupils, especially higher attainers, to work independently and use their initiative
 - strengthening the links between subjects to make the learning interesting, relevant and challenging
 - ensuring that governors are fully involved in holding the school to account for its performance.