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Mr M Harding  
St Catherine's Church of England Primary and Nursery School  
Musket Road  
Newton Abbott  
Devon  
TQ12 6SB

Dear Mr Harding

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Thursday 4 November, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to your staff and pupils.

A new leadership structure has been in place since September 2010 through a management partnership with St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Kingsteington. A new head of teaching and learning works full time at the school with an executive headteacher who is shared between both schools. A new Assistant Headteacher has been appointed and is also the Year 6 classteacher.

As a result of the inspection on 1 July 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:

satisfactory progress in making improvements

*and*

satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

During the summer term 2010, a supply teacher worked as a Year 6 classteacher and standards in Year 6 increased. Results at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2010 improved in English with a greater proportion of pupils gaining Level 4 than in previous years, although fewer than expected attained the higher Level 5. Results for mathematics were similar to previous years with a slight improvement in the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5. Pupils made satisfactory progress from their starting points in English but inadequate progress in mathematics. The attainment of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities was similar to that of their peers in English and better in mathematics. Key Stage 1 results for 2010 demonstrate fewer than average pupils attaining the higher Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school's leadership, in post for a short time, has worked with a clear purpose to tackle the key priorities for improvement. Leaders and managers have been swift to identify and address weaknesses. Primarily, they have focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Lesson observations show that the current progress of pupils across the school is at least satisfactory. The previous underachievement in mathematics is being successfully addressed, although pupils' current attainment remains low.

Teachers now adopt a consistent approach to behaviour management and this promotes a positive attitude from pupils. Good teaching in Year 2 is enabling the majority of pupils to make good progress in adding single digit numbers confidently in their heads. More-able pupils could apply their mathematical knowledge to solve two- and three-digit number problems. The school is intent on improving pupils' progress by raising the quality of teaching across the school so that it is consistently good or better. Pupils in Year 6 were out of school during the inspection and it was therefore not possible to observe directly teaching and learning for this group.

Senior leaders have revised the school's marking policy. This now places a clear emphasis on the learning that pupils are making in lessons. Pupils report that this has resulted in them being given immediate and detailed support on how to improve their work. Scrutiny of marking in exercise books shows that pupils are provided with helpful comments and are clear about the next steps they need to take to improve their work.

Improvements in planning ensure teaching assistants are providing more appropriate support for pupils who need additional help. The partner school continues to provide good support and is working alongside individual teachers. Teaching assistants are now encouraging pupils to apply their skills and knowledge in lessons and this is helping to increase pupils' confidence and independence. Teachers are much better at planning activities that are aimed at meeting the needs of different abilities within the classes. However, when teaching is satisfactory, ongoing assessments are not used well enough to set clear objectives or to adapt planning effectively enough to meet the needs of the different ability groups.

The school's leadership is clearly focused on raising standards. The local authority has provided good support in timely assessments of the school's overall effectiveness and improving safeguarding arrangements. Senior leaders have completed a clear development plan with a series of carefully sequenced actions, although, to date, there has been no specific focus on raising pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics. Development plans use evaluations of the school's initial successes effectively. Staff appreciate the improved communication and clarity about the direction set by the leadership.

The school has introduced regular formal assessments to more closely track pupils' progress and monitor the effectiveness of strategies to address lapses in progress. Monitoring of teaching and learning has been rigorous; teachers report that they are provided with clear messages about areas to improve. However, these development points have not always been focused sufficiently on the progress of all groups of pupils, particularly in mixed-age classes.

The most recent school development plans include actions to improve the school's community cohesion. The school's revised behaviour policy has had a clear impact on pupils' behaviour and relationships. Pupils respond positively to the praise they receive for their good behaviour and this has helped to make a more cohesive school community. Although the school has introduced topics on St Lucia and Year 6 pupils have attended an African music workshop, their national and global understanding remains weak.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Lindfield

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

As a result of the inspection on 1 July 2009, the school was asked to:

- ensure that pupils make good progress and hence attain higher standards, especially in their writing, by enhancing the successful strategies already adopted
- ensure that the planning of work to meet individual needs uses a range of approaches that enable pupils to develop their skills of working independently
- promote community cohesion and cultural development by broadening pupils' understanding of the range of communities in Britain and the rest of the world.