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11 January 2011

Mr Simon Thorpe
The Headteacher
St Mary's School
Maynards Green
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East Sussex
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Dear Mr Thorpe

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 10 January 2011, 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 staff, pupils and your senior colleagues for providing me with valuable comments on the school's work.

In September 2010, the school entered into a formal collaboration with local pupil referral units and the head of school, who had formerly been working across the federation, was able to be full time at St Mary's..

As a result of the inspection on 13 and 14 January 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.

Most pupils who join the school are disillusioned with learning, lack confidence in their own abilities and have experienced a fractured educational career. Consequently, their attainment is well below average. Once at the school, their demeanour improves and they recover their optimism about the future. Lessons are characterised by good behaviour management, clear lesson objectives, good use of new technology and good teamwork between staff. Pupils behave well, are

September 2010



respectful to visitors and quickly form strong relationships with staff. This helps them to re-engage with learning and get back on track. The school's data show that attainment is rising as a result of accelerating progress, particularly in mathematics. The appointment of a well-qualified subject specialist in science, together with improvements in subject accommodation and resources, is having a positive impact.

The quality of information provided for parents has improved significantly. Parents receive formal and informal weekly updates on their children's progress, as well as interim and final annual reports on their children's learning, behaviour and attendance. As yet, reports contain insufficient detail about pupils' individual learning targets, which would enable parents to assist their children more effectively with their school work at home.

The school has improved its system for tracking pupils' academic progress and for setting challenging goals for achievement. Staff use a good range of assessments to establish the pupils' starting points in literacy and numeracy. Staff measure progress in learning and behaviour each lesson, and the school enters the cumulated information into its tracking system every two terms. Senior staff analyse the data thoroughly to see whether any pupil, or group of pupils, are underachieving so that remedial strategies can be put in place where necessary. Most staff make good use of this information in planning lessons. However, one or two staff are not so skilful in using this information to ensure that lesson activities are well matched to meet all the differing needs and capabilities of learners, especially those who attain less highly.

The school now sets a wide range of relevant and measurable behaviour and learning targets for the pupils, and regularly measures progress against these. In lessons, individual targets are not always sufficiently referred to by the teachers so that some pupils are not completely aware of their next steps in learning, particularly in the core subjects. This restricts their opportunities to learn independently. The school has recognised this issue and is guiding staff on ways to emphasise individual targets in lessons.

In September 2010, the school achieved specialist status in behaviour, cognition and learning. The school is already making good use of the additional resources to improve provision, for example by improving the curriculum for practical science.

The school evaluates its own provision more accurately through its new data system. This is already demonstrating a tangible track record of improvement in the core subjects. The new senior management team is working effectively to ensure steady improvement in the quality of the provision and outcomes. These factors show that the school is now better placed to sustain improvement.

The local authority provides good support for the school, particularly through the effective assistance of the school's improvement partner.



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

Mick Megee
Additional inspector



Annex

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

- Ensure that the new processes for setting targets make a clear and measurable difference to the progress that all pupils make.
- Ensure that full use is made of a comprehensive tracking system so that it supports detailed analysis of the progress made over time by groups of pupils and fully informs future planning.
- Improve the quality of reports to parents so that they contain a concise description of progress made, targets set and what their child knows, understands and can do.

There were nine further areas for improvement identified in the 2009 inspection report, all of which relate to the inspection of the boarding provision which took place at the same time. These areas for improvement were the subject of a separate inspection of the residential care provision that took place in February 2010. This report is available on the Ofsted website on:

[http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_reports/download/\(id\)/223928/\(as\)/SC050392_SC.pdf](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_reports/download/(id)/223928/(as)/SC050392_SC.pdf).

