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3 February 2011

Mrs S Helps
Headteacher
St Bartholomew's CofE VC Primary School
Princess Way
Stourport-on-Severn
DY13 0EL

Dear Mrs Helps

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Bartholomew's CofE VC Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 2 February 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. I am also grateful to the local authority representative who gave his time to speak to me. Please pass on my thanks to the staff who also spent time in conversation with me and to the pupils for being so friendly and helpful.

The basic characteristics of your school are very similar to those at the time of the last inspection. However, since then two teachers have left and the deputy headteacher has been seconded to another school. A new deputy headteacher and Early Years Foundation Stage leader were seconded into the school in September 2010. The position of Chair of the Governing Body is vacant. A new unit for the Early Years Foundation Stage was completed in April 2010.

As a result of the inspection on 18 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

satisfactory progress in making improvements

and

satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.



The school is successfully emerging from a turbulent period. The good leadership of the headteacher stabilised the school and ensured that significant improvements took place, but the pace was slower than it should have been. With the good support of the local authority and a new team of senior leaders, the pace of driving and securing improvement has quickened, the decline in pupil outcomes has been halted and there is an upward trend.

Attainment at the end of Year 6 has improved over the past three years, and in 2010 it was broadly average, rather than significantly below average, as in previous years. Although one third of the current Year 6 have special educational needs and/or disabilities, an increased percentage of pupils are on track to reach Level 4 and 5 at the end of 2011. There is a similar increase in the percentage of pupils on track to reach Level 3 at the end of Year 2 in reading and writing. Tailored-made interventions and improvements in the quality of teaching and learning are helping pupils, throughout the school, to tackle the gaps caused by previous underachievement. Progress has improved in all year groups but it is all very recent and the school recognises that more needs to be done. In the majority of lessons, pupils show a secure grasp of their literacy and numeracy skills. These are consolidated when pupil's next steps in learning are clear and pupils have time to make improvements. However, when this is not the case misconceptions persist.

A major change in staffing has meant that teaching and learning are improving, although some inconsistencies still exist. Teachers' assessments are becoming more accurate. Most pupils are actively engaged in their learning because it is pitched at the right level. However, in some lessons, a lack of precision in assessment means that, for a few pupils, work is either too easy or too hard, and they make satisfactory rather than good progress.

The headteachers' clear lead ensures that senior leaders, members of the governing body and staff are clearly focused on raising pupil's achievement and promoting high standards of care. The school's pursuit for improvement is well managed. As a result, the legacy of underachievement is being eliminated and standards are improving. Members of the new leadership team are clear about their roles and responsibilities and are keenly focused on driving ambition and securing improvement. They have quickly got to grips with what needed to be done and taken successful actions to address deficiencies and make improvements in teaching, learning and pupils' outcomes. Together with the headteacher they have established an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and these are reflected in the school's coherent plans for improvement.

The chairs of the governing body's five committees have formed a 'chair committee'. They hold regular meetings with each other and with the headteacher and have already set up the next year's agenda. They support and challenge where and when appropriate. They have 'grown' into this role and governance is now much stronger than it was two years ago. Both the local authority and the diocese have lent the school their support in the search for a new chair. A training programme has



ensured that all members of the governing body are aware of their responsibilities. Associate governors from the community and the children's centre have joined the core members of the governing body.

The strong leadership of the headteacher, a newly focused leadership team, a revitalized governing body and the enthusiasm and commitment of staff all mean that the school is in a better position than it was two years ago. It has made satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has introduced a carefully constructed assessment policy, which is consistent with the whole-school policy and is already successfully tracking children's development and their achievement. Staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage have been trained to make learning observations and teachers undertake joint moderation to ensure that data is reliable. Children are proud of their well-structured and informative 'Learning Journeys', which are an important record of their achievement that can be shared their parents.

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

Barbara Atcheson
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise standards by securing improvement in the pupils' grasp of basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching and learning by ensuring that tasks set in all lessons more precisely match the pupils' learning needs.
- Develop the leadership roles of middle managers to improve the school's capacity for improvement.
- Implement a consistent assessment policy in the Early Years Foundation Stage that will help track the children's development and achievement.