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10 March 2011

Mrs A Knowles  
Headteacher  
St Thomas CofE Primary School  
St Thomas Street  
Werneth  
Oldham  
Lancashire  
OL8 1SE

Dear Mrs Knowles

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Thomas CofE Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 9 March 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 pupils who gave up some of their lunchtime to talk with me and to the governors and staff for their time and courtesy.

Since the last inspection, the headteacher has been seconded to a local primary school for four terms and has recently returned to school on a full-time basis. There is a new chair of governors, four new class teachers and new building work, resulting in a rise in pupil numbers.

As a result of the inspection on 21 October 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.

Pupils' attainment and levels of progress fluctuate across cohorts and groups. There are improvements in the attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2010 and, although attainment remains below the national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2, current school data suggest some pupils and groups are now making better progress. For example, a third of the Year 6 pupils made accelerated progress last term in mathematics.

Priority has been directed to improving teaching and learning and the school has received support in this from the local authority through advisers and consultants. The headteacher reports an improving profile of teaching since the last inspection, due to a focus on improving planning and the use of assessment data. The school has implemented a new curriculum which is having a positive impact on teaching and learning and pupils talk with

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enthusiasm about how areas of learning link together. Monitoring of teaching and learning has taken place led by the headteacher, and increasingly middle leaders are becoming more involved in assessing the quality of provision. Although much work has been carried out on improving the quality of teaching, there remain instances in lessons where expectations are too low and missed opportunities for learning are evident through a lack of pace and challenge. Attitudes to learning are strong and pupils are keen to learn. Improved tracking procedures are in place which result in teachers being held to account for the progress pupils make. The headteacher and deputy headteacher hold pupil progress meetings where class teachers discuss the progress of all pupils and, where they are falling behind, interventions are rapidly put into place.

Assessment information has developed. Improvements in tracking support, planning of pupils' next steps and teachers' planning evaluate pupils' learning on a daily basis. Tracking of attainment and progress ensures the school is more aware of pupils' achievements and leaders monitor the achievement of vulnerable groups. These procedures remain in their infancy and, as such, it is difficult to measure their impact, although there is some evidence to suggest some pupils are now making accelerated progress in some areas of learning. However, a large number of pupils are not making enough progress and the school acknowledges it still has work to do to improve this area of work.

Pupils have group and personal targets. They are able to discuss these and generally are aware of what they need to do to improve. The way in which these are presented in school varies from class to class. This inconsistency can lead to a lack of clarity for pupils and staff. Marking of pupils' work is also inconsistent. In the best instances, pupils are guided in how to improve their work and next steps in learning are indicated. However, some marking simply affirms the efforts of pupils. The headteacher holds a clear vision of how this work will be developed to ensure a greater clarity of purpose.

The headteacher's recent return to school from a secondment has increased the drive and determination to improve outcomes. This along with a strengthened governing body ensures the school has a better capacity for sustained improvement. The local authority has supported the school by focusing training on teaching and learning, especially in mathematics. The work of consultants has generally been well received and an effective partnership between the local authority and the leaders of the school is evident.

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

Mrs Jane Millward  
Her Majesty's Inspector

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 21 October 2009**

- Raise standards by improving the quality of teaching so it is consistently good.
- Accelerate achievement by ensuring assessment information about pupils is used to plan the next steps required in learning for all pupils and to ensure that work challenges them appropriately.
- Ensure that pupils understand their personal learning targets and what they have to do to reach them so know what they are expected to achieve.