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30 March 2011

Mrs C Greenway  
Headteacher  
Chorley St James' Church of England Primary School  
Devonport Way  
Chorley  
Lancashire  
PR6 0TE

Dear Mrs Greenway,

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Chorley St James' Church of England Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you, your senior leaders and staff, pupils, Chair of the Governing Body and School Improvement Partner gave when I inspected your school on 29 March 2011. I am grateful for the time you gave to our telephone discussion, the on-site preparation and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

Since the last inspection a new deputy headteacher has been appointed and the current headteacher took up post in September 2010.

As a result of the inspection on 30 and 31 March 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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage are getting a solid grounding in early reading, writing and mathematics skills. Recent improvements to the outdoor curriculum are beginning to have a positive impact on children's learning and development.

Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 had been well below average for a number of years, especially in writing. Analysis of teacher assessments for the current Year 2 pupils shows that, following a concerted drive to raise achievement in writing and mathematics, an increased number are already exceeding 2010 outcomes and more are on track to reach the higher Level 3 in all subjects. Progress across Key Stage 2 is now equally good. Given their previous low levels of attainment these pupils have some considerable ground to make up in their learning. School data show many pupils are now making accelerated progress with more-able pupils, particularly in Years 5 and 6, exceeding their predicted targets in both English and mathematics. This is borne out by observations of teaching and analysis of pupils' work undertaken during the monitoring inspection.

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Senior leaders' insistence on consistently good teaching has led to considerable improvements. Records of regular checks confirm that raised expectations of pupils' capabilities, increased pace, more-effective use of long-term and day-to-day assessments and recent improvements in marking and feedback are having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Pupils comment on the changes: 'Lessons are faster and more fun and our teacher pushes you to do your best'. As evident during the monitoring inspection, lessons and activities are increasingly better planned, not only to ensure success for all but also to challenge the thinking of more-able pupils. Leaders recognise there is still some way to go in assuring consistency in teaching. It was evident during the inspection that not all teachers use their knowledge of pupils' abilities and potential to structure equally challenging activities for them all. The quality of marking has improved. Pupils are now better informed about how well they are doing and what exactly they need to do to improve their work. However, not all teachers are providing the valuable time or opportunities for pupils to do this, either in lessons or at home.

Much work has been done to develop the curriculum. This now strikes a clear balance between creativity and purposeful learning. It has been fully adapted to promote learning and enjoyment and, through meticulously planned themes, now provides many opportunities to extend pupils' basic skills beyond literacy and numeracy lessons. This has contributed effectively to pupils' better writing and problem-solving skills.

In their relatively short time in post the new headteacher, her deputy and the Chair of Governing Body have effectively conveyed high aspirations, galvanised all staff and accurately evaluated the current effectiveness of the school. With the unquestioned support of the leadership team, members of the governing body and the local authority, they have set the clear agenda to drive change and improvement. Swift impact on pupils' learning in English and mathematics means that the school is now on track to exceed its targets for both key stages. This is a turning point for the school.

Senior leaders are well aware of what is needed to keep the school moving towards good overall effectiveness. Planning for the future is now ambitious and realistic. The headteacher's tenacious focus on standards has ensured the governing body are much better placed in monitoring and evaluating improvement. With guidance from the headteacher and deputy headteacher, middle leaders are gaining expertise in data analysis, subject management skills and effective working. All staff have rallied through challenge and change. They now form a united team that shows a strong commitment to shared accountability and to working in new ways to bring about better life chances for pupils.

The local authority has contributed well to the school's improvement. This support has been focused and effective. The school's progress and success in tackling the recommendations for improvement reflect positively on its capacity for sustained improvement.

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 Eithne Proffitt  
**Additional Inspector**

January 2011



## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 30 March 2009**

- Use assessment data more effectively to ensure that lessons are consistently challenging for pupils of all abilities, especially the more able.
- Develop a more creative and stimulating curriculum in all subjects to improve learning in the core subjects, especially writing and mathematics.
- Improve academic guidance, especially marking, so that pupils are much more aware of how to improve their basic skills.
- Ensure that self-evaluation and monitoring procedures are more rigorous so that the school's development is more effective and sustained.