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14 July 2011

Mrs Martin  
The Headteacher  
South Molton United Church of England Junior School  
North Street  
South Molton  
Devon  
EX36 3GN

Dear Mrs Martin

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of South Molton United Church of England Junior School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 July 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 13 and 14 January 2010, 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 good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The majority of pupils enter the school in Year 3 with skills and abilities that are in line with national expectations. However, until recently pupils' progress in English and mathematics throughout the school has slowed so that standards by the end of Key Stage 2 were well below the national average. The headteacher has demonstrated skill and determination in raising teachers' expectations and on improving areas of weakness in teaching in order to secure the necessary improvements for pupils. The school is now working steadily and successfully to lift pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, outcomes for pupils throughout Key Stage 2 are improving.

The school's self-evaluation has been too generous in the past, but leaders are now better informed through possessing a clearer understanding of next steps in school improvement. This is because leaders have been effective in establishing an accurate and reliable system to monitor pupils' progress and this is being used rigorously to set more challenging targets for pupils and thereby accelerate their learning. As a result, pupils' achievement overall is improving. Accurate and comprehensive



information now provides leaders with essential guidance about the effectiveness of the school and allows teachers to plan lessons that better provide for the needs of individual pupils. More pupils are now experiencing consistently good teaching as more effective checks on their progress are helping to identify those pupils capable of attaining highly as well as those who underachieve. Consequently, recent, but unvalidated test results for 2011, show positive improvements, particularly in mathematics which has come in line with the national average. Attainment in English remains below the national average, although this too has improved strongly on previous years.

The school has worked closely with the local authority and benefited from specialist support to ensure the school has a clear and coherent long-term curriculum plan that provides well for pupils' different needs and interests. For example, further training for teachers and support staff to enhance the development and progress of pupils' speaking, listening and writing skills has been provided. Senior leaders acknowledge there is still work to do to ensure continuity in planning and progression in skills development are appropriately planned for within each curriculum subject.

The school ensures all adults are appropriately trained, kept up to date in safeguarding pupils and is vigilant in the way that records are kept. The headteacher has implemented a robust system to manage staff performance. This has been aided by the use of a wider range of assessment information from lessons, samples of work and other information about pupils' learning.

Frequent communications with the headteacher and the regular calling to account of subject leaders allow the governing body to take an informed and confident approach to setting the strategic direction of the school. The headteacher has promoted the development of middle leaders well and they are better informed and able to lead on their areas of responsibility. As a result, all leaders and managers are now in a stronger position to embed ambition and drive and secure improvement. Overall the school's effectiveness in tackling areas for improvement is gaining momentum and evidence of its good capacity to improve further.

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

David Edwards  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**



## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2010**

- In order to improve pupils' attainment, ensure the quality of teaching is good or better in the majority of lessons in all classes by the end of this school year, making sure:
  - all teachers make full use of the new assessment arrangements and information when planning lessons and setting targets
  - work set is challenging and consistently matched closely to the needs of different ability groups
  - teachers regularly provide clear feedback to pupils about how to improve
  - pupils are provided with frequent opportunities to talk about and reflect on how well they are doing and their next steps.
- Provide those new to their leadership roles with training to enable them to become fully and effectively involved in monitoring and improving those aspects for which they have responsibility by the end of this school year.
- Ensure the school has a clear and coherent long-term curriculum plan by September 2010 which:
  - responds to pupils' different needs and interests
  - takes full advantage of computer technologies
  - is sufficiently flexible to adapt to changing class organisation from one year to the next.