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Mrs L Matthews
The Headteacher
Stansted Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Matthews

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Stansted Church of England Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 5 October 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Would you thank the members of the school council who spoke to me and the Chair of the Governing Body with whom I met?

Staffing is stable, with no class teachers appointed since the school was last inspected. The new Chair of the Governing Body has been in post since March 2011. A new environmental learning area, including a pond, meadow and garden is used to enhance pupils' learning out of doors. Covered storage has been improved for outdoor play equipment for children in Reception.

As a result of the inspection on 9 and 10 June 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 of 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 enter the school with widely differing levels of skills and knowledge. They do well in Reception, with significant strengths in areas such as their personal, social and emotional development and problem solving and less strong performance in their knowledge and understanding of the world and their development of communication and language skills. In the most recent national tests and

assessments pupils' performance at the end of Year 2 improved strongly. Because year groups are small, pupils' attainment varies widely, but is broadly average over time. Attainment at the end of Year 6 fell in 2011, but this small group of pupils nonetheless made good progress given their starting points. Evidence from the school's analysis of tests and assessments and from pupil progress meetings, and a scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that attainment is rising. While year groups are small, sometimes as few as eight pupils, the school analyses the progress of potentially underachieving groups with care.

The quality of teaching has improved since the school was last inspected. Teachers are making better use of the school's assessment information to plan lessons, group pupils to best effect, and provide individual targeted support. The termly pupil progress meetings between teachers and the headteacher have a sharper focus on raising pupils' attainment and accelerating progress. As a result, teachers plan their lessons with more precision so that expectations for groups of pupils are explicit. In the best lessons what pupils are expected to learn is shared with them. Changes to the curriculum have made it more appealing and exciting. For example, the Creative Partnerships Project in the summer term linked cross-curricular themes such as art, science and music to developing pupils as independent learners. Class learning targets, based on an analysis of gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills, have been consolidated across the school. As pupils become more familiar with these, they independently assess and track their progress to good effect. Teaching assistants support focus groups well.

In the best lessons teachers use questioning extremely well to engage and challenge all pupils, drawing in those who are slow to respond. Good open-ended questions, such as those related to the criteria for classifying two-dimensional shapes, really make pupils pause and think hard. Pupils are very good at working with others, but sometimes opportunities for them to work together or discuss their work are not fully exploited. Pupils are keen and eager learners and relationships are strong.

The outdoor learning area used by the Reception class has been enhanced through the provision of a range of new equipment such as tricycles, sand and water play and construction equipment. Children move well between learning indoors using the school's computers, learning with sand in the covered area and building a 'house for granny' outside. Their learning outside is well supported by both the class teacher and the learning assistant.

The school's checks on those who work with children are meticulous and staff training in respect of safeguarding is up to date. The headteacher continues to provide effective leadership with a clear focus on raising pupils' attainment and accelerating progress. She has a clear understanding of what constitutes good teaching and how even the best lessons can be improved. Her feedback on teaching and learning is accurate and concise. The school improvement plan now has a much sharper focus on ways of measuring success so that teachers and the school are more easily held to account by members of the governing body. The school's better

capacity to improve means it is now more securely placed to see its vision of creating 'Learners today – leaders tomorrow' come to fruition.

The local authority is providing effective strategic support, with more to be planned for the year ahead.

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

Robert Lovett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2010.

- Develop the outdoor area used by the Reception class to make it a more stimulating and inviting space for learning, where children can move seamlessly from indoor to outdoor learning.
- Refine the use of assessment information to ensure that tasks and activities are precisely matched to the needs and interests of the different groups of pupils.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their work, assess their own progress and so develop greater independence.