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13 October 2011

Mr R Townshend  
Headteacher  
St Mary's CofE Primary School, East Grinstead  
Windmill Lane  
East Grinstead  
West Sussex  
RH19 2DS

Dear Mr Townshend

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Mary's CofE Primary School, East Grinstead**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 October 2011, for the time you gave to our preliminary meeting and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the joint Chair of the Governing Body, staff and pupils who took the time to meet with me during the day.

Since the school's last inspection, there have been several changes to the teaching staff. There has also been an increase in the proportion of pupils attending the school who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The Chair of Governing Body stepped down recently and there is now a co-chair arrangement with two governors sharing the responsibility.

As a result of the inspection on 9–10 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 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.

The percentage of pupils making expected progress in English and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2 rose significantly in 2011 so that all Year 6 pupils had made two levels of progress in English and only one pupil had not made expected progress in mathematics. Across the school, there has been a sustained focus on raising expectations and improving the quality of teaching and learning in lessons, and teachers understand their accountability for pupils' progress. School leaders ensure that teachers' evaluations of pupils' attainment are accurate by holding regular

meetings where teachers compare their assessments and agree on the levels of attainment. These meetings are held between classes and across year groups. The school's judgements have also been validated by external moderators.

Termly meetings with teachers to review pupils' progress ensure that any underachievement is spotted and addressed quickly. Senior leaders and teachers agree specific strategies to improve progress and these are then reviewed at the next meeting. This has resulted in better rates of in-year progress across the school, although senior leaders recognise there are still some inconsistencies between subjects and across year groups. For example, in Reception, children make uneven progress across the six areas of learning. Outcomes in some areas such as communication, language and literacy, and knowledge and understanding of the world, are lower than would be expected for their age group given children's starting points. The school's own analysis of performance data also shows that pupils tend to make better progress in reading than in writing across Key Stage 1.

The quality of learning observed during the inspection confirms the school's view that the proportion of good teaching is increasing. Senior leaders carry out regular observations of classroom practice and teachers appreciate the detailed oral feedback they receive. Teachers are reflective about their own practice and value the opportunity to work jointly with colleagues on improving an aspect of their work as 'peer coaches'. A detailed monitoring schedule has been drawn up for the current academic year which includes a greater range of monitoring activities such as reviews of teachers' planning and scrutiny of pupils' work books, and this will help senior leaders to gain a more rounded view of the full range of teachers' competencies.

Teachers are making better use of assessment to support learning. The revised marking policy is being applied consistently and is shared with pupils so that they understand whether they have been successful in meeting the learning objective of the lesson. However, there is very little marking in books that gives specific guidance to pupils on what they need to do to improve. Staff set targets for pupils in Key Stage 2 for English and mathematics, and pupils say that these help them to understand the level they are working at. Teachers generally provide tasks in lessons that challenge different levels of ability and their planning includes extension activities for pupils. The support of teaching assistants is well focused when they are supporting individual learners or small groups, but they are sometimes underused in whole-class sessions. Some teachers are particularly successful in allowing pupils to make choices about their learning. For example, in a 6 lesson, pupils were directing their own learning about the Second World War; selecting the resources they needed for research, working alone or with a partner, working indoors or outside, and deciding how to present their work.

The topic-based curriculum is broad and balanced, and makes meaningful links between subjects. Enrichment activities, such as outings, are being carefully matched to each topic to give pupils memorable experiences. The impact of the curriculum is clear in pupils' enjoyment and they talk with enthusiasm about topics

such as 'Space' and 'Explorers'. School leaders are aware that current curriculum planning does not show how key skills in foundation subjects such as history and geography are being developed across each key stage.

The headteacher and his senior leadership team communicate their high expectations clearly. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in the school and morale is high. Middle leaders are being given opportunities to develop their skills so that their contribution to school improvement can be enhanced. Self-evaluation is robust and accurate, although school leaders have yet to decide how this will be documented. Governors have built their knowledge and skills so that they are able to understand the school's work and, increasingly, can hold school leaders to account. Some key governors visit the school regularly and are beginning to monitor its work. A policy for governors' visits has been developed and the monitoring schedule for the current year shows that more governors will be involved in evaluating the progress of the priorities in the school's plan.

School leaders have been receptive to the well-targeted support from the local authority and this has helped to build 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

Melanie Knowles  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- **By September 2011: Ensure 90% of pupils are making at least the expected progress in English and mathematics in each year by:**
  - providing pupils with information about how well they are doing and setting targets that will allow them to know what to do next
  - providing tasks that challenge all levels of ability
  - using assessment information to quickly identify and remedy any potential underachievement.
  
- **Eliminate the variability in teaching so that 90% is good or better by:**
  - using the monitoring of teaching more effectively to set clearly defined development areas which can be assessed for their success and help inform the school's self-evaluation
  - ensuring that whole-school assessment information is used to make teachers more accountable for the progress of their class.