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19 October 2011

Mrs Goldsmith  
Headteacher  
The Lady St Mary Church of England  
- Voluntary Controlled First School  
Streche Road  
Wareham  
Dorset  
BH20 4PG

Dear Mrs Goldsmith

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of The Lady St Mary Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School, Wareham**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 18 October 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 staff, pupils and governors for their help. I would like to thank the School Education Partner and parents and carers for coming to meet me.

Since the inspection, there have been changes in staffing, which include a new headteacher. Several new governors have joined the governing body.

As a result of the inspection on 25 and 26 May 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.

Pupils' attainment is improving. The gap between school performance and national expectations at the end of Year 2 has narrowed, as can be seen from the most recent school test results for 2011, which are in line with the national average. The standards reached by pupils in Year 4 are higher than local expectations. School and national data show that from pupils' starting points this represents good progress.



The now good teaching is underpinned by the effective way teachers use assessment in lessons. This means that learning tasks are matched to the needs of the pupils and so they routinely make good progress. In a Year 4 English lesson, pupils used interesting words to include in their shape poems, because the teacher had carefully selected examples which fuelled their imagination. Pupils are confident to contribute in lessons. In a Year 3 mathematics lesson, focusing on data, pupils explained how they had worked collectively to produce a tally chart. They were able to find information from the chart in answer to the teacher's questions. Lessons generally move along at a good pace. In the most effective lessons, teachers have high expectations and regularly remind pupils to produce their best work. Teachers give clear instructions which reinforce basic skills in English and mathematics, such as punctuation reminders in written work and addition strategies in numeracy. In this way, pupils are being constantly challenged to improve their work. Occasionally, in a few lessons, tasks set do not sufficiently extend the abilities of higher-achieving pupils. In talking to pupils, some reported that they would like harder work in English and mathematics. Teachers' planning generally takes account of the range of abilities in their classes. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported by teaching assistants and so make good progress.

A strength of teachers' marking is the consistency throughout the school. Consequently, pupils can talk about their targets and how to improve their work. Pupil one-to-one conferencing, introduced since the last inspection, is proving to be very successful in raising achievement. Teachers talk to pupils about their progress and encourage pupils to see for themselves what they are good at and what needs improving. Teachers write comments in English and mathematics books to show when pupils have understood a new way of working or improved an aspect of their work. All staff have been involved in revising the school marking policy to reflect the current practice. The range of marking strategies, and the focus on assessment, ensures that those pupils who may be potentially vulnerable, or at risk of falling behind, are quickly identified and actions put in place. As a result, all pupils progress at a good pace.

There is now a clear progression of skills through curriculum subjects. Pupils have opportunities to apply their skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology to their work on topics. A project on dinosaurs led to pupils using research skills to find information and set up a dinosaur museum. Parents and carers comment on the increased range of learning opportunities during and after school. Pupils have the chance to research their own topics, and this has led to good quality written work. The school acknowledges that more work is needed to provide opportunities to improve pupils' writing further and has plans in place to address this.

The relentless drive and ambition of the leadership team in improving the quality of teaching has led to higher pupil confidence and the acceleration of their progress. The headteacher has supported and challenged the staff well through a planned programme of monitoring of teaching and learning. As a result, approaches to



teaching using assessment in lessons are consistent throughout the school. Higher expectations and improved tracking systems mean that staff have a greater accountability for the success of the pupils in their class. The tracking of pupils' progress shows that subject leaders have an increased impact on raising standards across the school. Subject audits, now in place, link with the school development plan, and are reviewed and reported on throughout the year. Middle leaders now play an important role in the school's development.

The governing body has a clearer understanding of its roles and responsibilities. The annual cycle of meetings, and reviewing policies and procedures, now in place means that statutory responsibilities are met. Governors are a cohesive team committed to raising the achievement of all pupils. They contribute to school self-evaluation and are well informed through the comprehensive headteacher reports. As a result, governors have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. Therefore, they are better placed to monitor school performance.

The school has made effective use of the support from the local authority for governor training. As a result, governors are well trained and in a good position to support and challenge the work of the school. Governors are now empowered to ask questions and participate in discussions relating to the continuing drive to raise the achievement of all pupils. The partnership with the School Education Partner has supported the school in improving school performance. Consequently, actions taken have built a good capacity for further 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

Jane Neech

**Her Majesty's Inspector**



## Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
  - by June 2011, at least 80% of teaching in the school is consistently good
  - teachers provide sufficient challenge for the more-able pupils in their class
  - basic skills are reinforced regularly
  - teachers make consistently good use of assessment strategies in lessons and in their marking to help pupils to progress at a good pace.
  
- Develop the curriculum so that it provides teachers with clear guidance about progression in skills, knowledge and understanding.
  
- Develop the role of subject leaders so that they have a greater impact on raising standards and are more focused on how their work will be of benefit to pupils.
  
- Develop the role of the governing body so that they:
  - are more able to challenge and hold the school to account
  - contribute more fully to helping the school to improve
  - ensure that policies are regularly reviewed and monitored to assess their impact on pupils' achievements
  - ensure that all aspects of their statutory requirements are met in full.