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Miss E Simpson
Headteacher
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Lostwithiel
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PL22 0RA

Dear Miss Simpson

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Winnow C of E School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 9 November 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Kindly pass on my appreciation to the group of pupils, members of staff and representatives of the governing body who met with me. I am also grateful to the School Improvement Partner who made the time to speak with me on the telephone.

There have been several changes at the school since the previous inspection. In the last academic year, two teachers left the school and one teacher joined on a fixed-term contract. In September 2011, a falling roll meant the number of classes reduced from three to two. In January 2011, a senior teacher was appointed internally and became a member of the senior leadership team along with the senior school secretary. In September 2011, a pre-school manager was appointed and also became a member of the senior leadership team. Four members of the governing body have left and been replaced. In April 2011, the governing body elected a new Chair and Vice-Chair.

As a result of the inspection on 4 and 5 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 the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

In 2011, pupils' attainment fell at the end of both key stages. The national test results for pupils in Year 6 showed that attainment in both English and mathematics

fell. The proportions of pupils who reached the expected and higher levels in English and mathematics were noticeably lower than those in other schools. Pupils' rates of progress were also below those expected. This was mainly because the quality of teaching in some classes had not been good enough, in the past. Since the previous inspection, the school has taken determined action to remedy these issues. Pupils' work in books and the school's most recent assessment information show that attainment is rising and rates of progress are increasing. While underachievement remains, it is reducing steadily as the improvements in teaching become more established.

The school has implemented several effective approaches to improve pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics. For example, pupils have more opportunities to develop their ideas by telling stories orally and by writing for sustained periods. The explicit, daily teaching of early literacy skills is also making a difference. One session observed during the inspection was characterised by a brisk pace, the effective use of new technologies and a good range of multi-sensory activities to develop younger pupils' understanding of letters and sounds, although at times, staff did not model key skills and important vocabulary with sufficient clarity. In mathematics, pupils have plenty of opportunities to learn by doing. In lessons, pupils had many opportunities to handle practical resources to support their learning and apply their skills to real-life problems. Teaching assistants provided capable support to those with additional needs and challenged the more able. In some lessons seen, pupils had insufficient time to be active learners because there was too much teacher talk and questions did not move their learning on. Consequently, several pupils became restless and their progress slowed.

Teachers have a clearer understanding of the expectations for different ages as a result of working with colleagues from other local schools. Assessment information is used increasingly well to carefully match tasks to pupils' abilities and set targets for the future. While systems for setting targets are established, pupils are not sufficiently clear about the small steps they need to make to progress to the next level in literacy. Teachers' comments, seen in a sample of books, provide clear guidance on the next steps they need to take. Nevertheless, marking in mathematics books does not comment clearly enough on the strategies used. Pupils have a clearer understanding of how to improve their work, but time is not set aside on a regular basis for them to respond to teachers' comments.

The school has implemented a suitable set of actions to develop pupils' understanding of different cultures. An audit has been conducted to ensure that library books and other resources for learning reflect modern multicultural Britain. Additional resources have also been purchased, such as a set of African drums. New curriculum themes such as 'Down Under' and 'India, Food and Farming' provide pupils with more opportunities to learn about life in other countries. The school continues to promote an appreciation of Cornish culture to provide pupils with a point of reference for comparison. While greater use is made of visitors and themed events, plans to establish a link with a school in a contrasting environment have not

come to fruition. The challenge now is to evaluate the difference these learning experiences have made to pupils' wider cultural understanding.

The local authority's comprehensive programme of support has provided additional capacity during a period of turbulence in staffing. The senior leadership team has recently been re-established and the induction of new members has been supported by individual training programmes from national providers. Consequently, members play an increasingly active part in monitoring and evaluating the school's work. The quality of self-evaluation is improving, informed by robust monitoring procedures. However, plans for improvement lack interim milestones to enable leaders to evaluate progress towards the anticipated objective. Management duties have been distributed more widely to good effect to develop the management capacity of others. For example, the headteacher has more time for improvement priorities because some line-management responsibilities have been passed to the senior school secretary. The school's increased independence to direct the support it receives is evidence of a growing capacity for further improvement.

The governing body has also been strengthened by new appointments that bring a broad range of skills and experience. Training provided by the School Improvement Partner has provided members with a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Consequently, members provide a greater level of accountability and challenge through being better informed. Members' visits to the school are not focused sharply enough on the priorities for improvement. At the time of this monitoring inspection, the school's arrangements for checking the suitability of staff to work with children met government requirements.

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

Ian Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise the quality of teaching from satisfactory to good, and consequently improve standards in writing and mathematics, by providing more challenging opportunities for pupils, especially the more able.
- Improve the quality of learning of pupils in Years 5 and 6 by making better use of assessment, including marking and the use of pupil targets, so that pupils have a clear understanding of how to progress to the next levels in their work.
- Improve the school's contribution to community cohesion by providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of cultures other than their own, both in Britain and the wider world.