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Miss C Marshall
Headteacher
St Luke's Church of England First School
Plymouth Road North
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Dear Miss Marshall

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Luke's CofE First School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 29 November 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, staff and representatives from the governing body for the time they gave to meet with me.

Since the school was last inspected in June 2010, there have been very few changes in staffing.

As a result of the inspection on 9 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 satisfactory progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Since the last inspection, the school has placed a greater emphasis on improving the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels and driving forward school improvement. In particular, robust systems have been introduced to keep a close eye on the progress made by different groups of pupils. Through regular training and moderation, teachers are able to assess pupils' work with much greater accuracy. The quality of teaching has improved significantly and, as a result, the proportion of pupils making accelerated progress is increasing.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage join the school with skills that are below those expected for their age and make good progress. By the time they join

Year 1, attainment is broadly in line with the expected level for their age. The latest school data indicate that a greater proportion of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 are making at least the expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the school recognises that there is still work to be done to accelerate rates of progress in Key Stage 2 and in writing across the school. As a result of better quality teaching, standards are beginning to rise. The latest moderated teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 indicate that standards have improved, particularly in mathematics. Standards at the end of Year 4 are in line with expectations for this age.

The quality of teaching has greatly improved since the last inspection. The latest school data indicate that over 80% of lessons are now judged to be good or better. The majority of lessons observed during the monitoring visit were judged to be good. Lesson planning now follows a common format and this enables teachers to carefully structure pupils' learning. Lessons are focused on clear learning objectives and teachers are using up-to-date assessment information to plan interesting activities that are carefully matched to the needs of the pupils. In all the lessons observed, pupils demonstrated positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour was good. Pupils mostly learn at a good pace but, on occasion, teachers move pupils on too quickly from tasks and work is not always completed. Teachers provide interesting activities, such as practical work in mathematics, to engage and challenge pupils. For example, pupils in Year 1 enjoyed learning about fractions in a fun way by making sandwiches to share and cutting modelling clay shapes in half. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning through their professional and caring support. Assessment is used increasingly effectively to set targets for individuals and different groups of pupils. Work is regularly marked and teachers provide useful guidance to help pupils improve. The school has made good progress in this area of improvement.

The school has made a positive start in improving pupils' cultural development and promoting community cohesion. The curriculum for religious education has been revised to ensure that pupils learn in depth about the major world faiths. Pupils have opportunities to visit places of worship such as the Progressive Synagogue in Birmingham. Wider curriculum planning has also been revisited and pupils learn about different communities in the United Kingdom, Europe and worldwide through a thematic approach. Pupils in Year 4 spoke knowledgeably about life in Ghana and how they had raised money for local farmers as part of a topic about chocolate. Visitors to school such as African drummers and RSVP (retired service and volunteer personnel) enhance pupils' understanding of world cultures and the diversity of different community groups. A number of links to further promote community cohesion have been initiated but are at an early stage of development.

The headteacher and senior leadership team have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school. The work of the school is rigorously monitored and evaluated through lesson observations, book trawls,

monitoring lesson planning and discussions with pupils. Senior leaders are becoming more confident in undertaking monitoring and evaluation and this is having a positive impact on school improvement. Subject leaders have received training and support from senior leaders, the local authority and external consultants to further develop their roles. Members of the governing body are supportive and knowledgeable about the work of the school. They are developing their expertise to enable them to shape the direction of the school more effectively. The school values the support from the local authority. Training has been provided, as requested by the school, and has been helpful in addressing areas of weakness and supporting school improvement. The impact of this support has been satisfactory. Significant improvements to the quality of teaching, rising standards and improving achievement demonstrate a good capacity to improve further. During the inspection, safeguarding procedures were checked and found to meet the latest 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

Marian Harker
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that the majority of lessons are consistently good or better by ensuring that:
 - all teachers are clear about what they want the pupils to learn and carefully guide the pupils through the small steps which help ensure effective learning
 - the pace of learning in all lessons is brisk, teachers do not talk for too long and the activities motivate pupils to learn
 - the quality of target-setting is improved so that it has a greater impact on helping pupils learn.

- Improve pupils' cultural development and the promotion of community cohesion by raising pupils' awareness, knowledge and understanding of the diverse range of faiths and communities in the United Kingdom and globally.

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by developing their monitoring and evaluation skills.