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30 November 2011

Ms L Gannon  
Headteacher  
St Stephen's Church of England Primary School  
Hunters Chase  
South Godstone  
Godstone  
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Dear Ms Gannon

### **Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of St Stephen's CofE Primary 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 discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Discussions with senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body and the local authority officer were also very helpful. Please pass on my thanks to all concerned for the time they gave to talk to me. I would particularly like to thank the pupils for the enjoyable time I spent talking with them and for their welcoming and polite behaviour.

Since the March 2011 inspection there have been some changes to staffing and organisation. Of particular note, since September 2011, the deputy headteacher has been released from her class teaching role in order to focus, with the headteacher, on school improvement. Additionally, there have been changes to the governing body, with the current Chair and Vice Chair of Governors only having been in place for a matter of weeks. Sickness absence has resulted in some inconsistency in provision.

As a result of the inspection on 30 and 31 March 2011, 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 is making inadequate progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

At the time of the last inspection, end of Key Stage 2 attainment was broadly average in English, but attainment in mathematics was low, and had been so for

three years. Despite steps being taken to raise attainment, there has been insufficient impact and end of Key Stage 2 data in 2011 showed a decline in attainment in both English and mathematics. The progress pupils made in their learning was insufficient and achievement for these pupils was inadequate. The school's assessment data shows that most children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress from their individual starting points and by the end of Reception they mostly reach expected levels for their age. Rates of progress vary through Key Stage 1, with attainment at the end of Year 2 having been consistently average over a number of years. Although 2011 data for end of Key Stage 1 showed a decline in attainment in reading, writing and mathematics, pupils made at least satisfactory progress.

Despite a more detailed and evaluative school improvement plan and a number of secured improvements, including those relating to handwriting and presentation as well as to aspects of mathematics, there has not yet been sufficient impact on teaching and learning to raise pupils' attainment. Lesson observations and analysis of the school's data confirm that pupils' attainment, particularly in Key Stage 2, is below average. A number of pupils currently in Year 6 need to make rapid progress in English and mathematics if they are to reach national expectations for their age group at the end of Key Stage 2. However, there is evidence that targeted pupils participating in mathematics intervention programmes, and those with additional educational needs and/or disabilities receiving specialist support from teaching assistants are making increased progress.

Raising the quality of teaching has rightly been identified by the senior leadership team as the key priority for the school. Records show there have been some improvements in the overall quality of teaching and learning, for example marking in English workbooks is giving pupils clearer feedback on success and next steps. However, improvements are not consistent or secure enough across all classes and have yet to have significant effect on pupils' progress particularly in Key Stage 2. Despite detailed planning, some inaccurate teacher assessment results in activities that are not always well enough matched to pupils' needs. In one lesson, able pupils were observed to complete tasks quickly and not to have sufficient extension activities. Progress was also limited when pupils spent far too long listening to the teacher. Questioning was not used well to assess understanding or to challenge thinking and many opportunities were missed to engage all pupils actively in their learning. As a consequence, pupils were passive, the pace of lessons was too slow and too little time was devoted to completing tasks either independently or in groups, rehearsing skills or demonstrating what they had learned. No lessons formally observed during the monitoring visit were better than satisfactory.

The school now has an appropriate set of priorities and staff and governors are committed to improvement. Recent changes, including the development of mathematics and English 'teams' are enabling the school to sharpen the focus on most vital improvements. Middle leaders are clearer about roles and responsibilities and what constitutes good provision. Target-setting and tracking systems are now afforded higher priority, although at present pupils are not fully involved in this

process. While joint observations revealed accurate assessments of the quality of teaching and learning, evaluations and feedback regarding lessons and all school improvement activity must focus more tightly on the impact upon learning and progress. The leadership team and the governing body accept the need to increase robustness, challenge and focus in all monitoring activities.

Recent reorganisation of governing body sub-committees, new membership and roles, together with training is enabling governors to increasingly hold the school to account. This enhances the school's capacity for further improvement.

The local authority's action plan for supporting the school is fit for purpose. It provides an effective means for evaluating the school's progress in raising pupils' standards. The local authority, via the School Improvement Adviser and consultants, has provided effective and well-received support for teachers and middle and senior leaders which is helping them to develop and improve their practice.

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

Hilary Macdonald  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2011**

- By March 2012, raise attainment in mathematics and writing by:
  - improving pupils' mental and problem solving skills in mathematics
  - improving pupils' spelling, punctuation and handwriting skills
  - increasing the number of effective intervention programmes to accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics at key Stage 2.
  
- By December 2012, improve the consistency of good teaching and pupils' good learning and progress by:
  - making better use of assessment to ensure that all work is consistently matched to all pupils' abilities
  - ensuring lesson introductions are not overlong and giving pupils clear time deadlines so they work more productively during group work.
  
- By December 2012, ensure that all staff with leadership responsibilities focus rigorously on improving the academic outcomes for pupils by:
  - ensuring the school improvement plan shows clear monitoring and evaluation criteria, including attainment targets for different years
  - supporting middle leaders so they can skillfully monitor the quality of teaching to judge its impact on the learning of different groups
  - providing training for members of the governing body to enable them to assess attainment and achievement.