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Mr Phil Bateman
Headteacher
Fritchley Church of England VA Primary School
Church Street
Fritchley
Derbyshire
DE56 2FQ

Dear Mr Bateman

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Fritchley Church of England VA Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Tuesday 13 December, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the staff and the representatives of the governing body with whom I spoke, for their time and courtesy. I would like particularly to thank the pupils for the enjoyable time I spent talking with them.

Since the previous inspection, there have been no significant contextual changes.

As a result of the inspection on 22 April 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 relatively small numbers of pupils in each cohort means that results of national tests can vary from year to year. However, the unvalidated results of national tests for pupils in Year 6 this year indicate that overall attainment is significantly above the national average. This represents an increase from the previous three years when overall attainment had been broadly average. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 in both English and mathematics is above average. School tracking data shows that pupils are making at least satisfactory progress in lessons and over time, with many making good progress. These developments are the result of improving provision and raised expectations.

Since the previous inspection, the school has introduced new systems for assessment which are becoming embedded throughout the school. Progress review meetings are holding teachers to account and ensuring that there is early identification of pupils who require additional support. Teachers are making effective use of assessment to inform planning, with most lessons well structured to meet the needs of all pupils. However, some more-able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. As a result, their learning slows, particularly in independent activities. Where teaching is good, pupils are actively involved in focused and purposeful learning and work is well matched to pupils' learning needs. Marking is carried out frequently and almost always tells pupils what they have done well. However, it does not always set a target for improvement. The school is aware that pupils have too few opportunities to review and respond to marking. Teachers have recently begun to involve pupils in assessing their own and each other's work and recognise that this is an area for further development.

The school has made a good start to developing the outdoor area. In particular, pupils talk enthusiastically about how they enjoy using the school garden to grow a variety of flowers, fruit, vegetables and herbs. They are highly motivated about growing vegetables that are subsequently prepared by the school cook for their lunches. Pupils also describe a number of memorable lessons conducted outside, including a re-enactment of a Roman battle. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enjoy free-flow access to an enlarged outdoor area which mirrors indoor provision across all six areas of learning.

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school. Robust monitoring of teaching and learning has led to important improvements being made. These improvements are steadily accelerating the progress that pupils make in both English and mathematics throughout the school. The good improvements since the last inspection and pupils' current outcomes demonstrate that the school's good capacity for sustained further improvement.

Members of the governing body are regular visitors in schools and play an active role in all aspects of school life. The governing body is developing its monitoring role through a programme of training and support and, as a result, is beginning to hold the school more rigorously to account.

The school appreciates the good and effective support provided by the local authority.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise standards by:
 - firmly embedding the assessment system so that pupils' progress can be consistently tracked
 - using the information from these assessments to challenge pupils with work that is more closely matched to their needs
 - employing greater rigour in the monitoring of teaching and learning so that it focuses more closely on the progress pupils are making.

- Ensure that the school's outdoor areas are developed fully, so that pupils have greater opportunities to experience the natural world for learning and outdoor play.