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Mr Mark Adams  
St Nicholas Priory CofE VC Junior School  
St Nicholas Road  
Great Yarmouth  
NR30 1NL

Dear Mr Adams

**Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Nicholas Priory CofE VC Junior School**

Following my visit with Andrew Lyons Additional Inspector to your school on 10–11 January 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 14 July 2011. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Newly-qualified teachers may not be appointed without consulting HMI.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Norfolk.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Raise attainment in English, mathematics and information and communication technology by:
  - ensuring all pupils have a secure grasp of the basic skills, knowledge and understanding expected for their age
  - giving pupils more opportunities to develop their numeracy and information and communication technology skills across the curriculum
  - building on the work to harness pupils' enthusiasm for reading
  - improving pupils' handwriting.
  
- Ensure that teaching is consistently at least good in order to accelerate pupils' progress by:
  - pitching work to just above pupils' level of attainment so that all pupils are challenged appropriately
  - having high expectations of how much work pupils can produce in lessons
  - ensuring that marking always helps pupils to improve through giving them opportunities to respond to advice.
  
- Increase the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels by:
  - accelerating the drive for improvement so that there is a real urgency in raising attainment
  - ensuring that the school's self-evaluation is accurate and based upon rigorous and systematic monitoring
  - ensuring strategic plans are ambitious and focus on what the school needs to do most to improve
  - ensuring that the governing body holds leaders fully accountable for the school's outcomes and gives them a clear strategic lead.

## **Special measures: monitoring of St Nicholas Priory CofE VC Junior School**

### **Report from the first monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 January 2012**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

#### **Context**

Since the last inspection, three newly-qualified teachers appointed prior to the last inspection took up their posts in September 2011. The headteacher, two assistants and an advanced skills teacher form a strategic core leadership team. Four year leaders are now year managers. The governing body has restructured to form a sub-committee for school improvement. Members of the governing body are currently considering a change to the school's status from Voluntary Controlled to Voluntary Aided to promote its Christian ethos.

#### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Improved monitoring, including more systematic tracking of pupils' progress, is providing a clearer view of how well individual pupils are achieving. Testing on entry in Year 3 generates a more accurate baseline to measure progress over time. Information gained from half-termly tests and assessments show that a higher proportion of pupils made at least one sub-level of progress in English and mathematics during the autumn term. Most pupils make more progress in mathematics than in reading and writing, reflecting the school's recent focus on promoting numeracy. However, this also reflects the low level of literacy, especially reading, noted in a significant proportion of younger pupils, including those that have English as an additional language.

Discrete reading, writing and mathematics lessons each morning, and a 'catch-up' curriculum for lower-ability pupils in Year 3 and Year 4, have been introduced to promote basic literacy and numeracy skills. Early signs are that this is helping to accelerate pupils' progress in numeracy. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, intensive support from teaching assistants helped small groups of pupils to make good progress in forming number bonds using a range of counting resources, and placing numbers up to 100 in order along a number line. However, shortfalls in their phonic awareness and word recognition continue to restrict pupils' progress. A minority of Year 3 pupils cannot read well enough for their ages and struggle to access learning.

Some steps have been taken to promote reading, including daily guided reading and an excellent story book produced by teachers, but these have not yet harnessed

pupils' enthusiasm for reading. Plans to promote information and communication technology are currently being prepared.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise attainment in English, mathematics and information and communication technology – satisfactory.

### **The quality of teaching**

In most lessons teachers share good relations with pupils and provide them with a caring, nurturing environment in which to learn. Lesson planning is much more consistent than at the time of the last inspection. Marking is regular and includes clear advice on what to do to improve, but time for pupils to follow this up remains limited. In the most effective lessons, teachers plan different tasks and use their classroom assistants to lead learning with small groups. Pupils of all abilities benefit greatly from this intensive guidance and support, and make good progress. Laptop computers are used effectively in some lessons to promote research but in general, the profile of information and communication technology is low.

Teachers have adopted the 'non-negotiables' introduced by senior leaders and expectations are rising. However, in a minority of lessons, the volume of work completed remains low and pupils' presentation is untidy. Teachers know their pupils well and have an improved range of assessment data to plan tasks matched to pupils' different abilities. However, this planning does not always transfer into delivery, so in many lessons pupils end up doing the same activities which are too easy for some and too difficult for others. Most classrooms have two or three adults present to aid pupil learning, but they spend too long listening to the teacher or carrying out duties that do not accelerate pupils' learning.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that teaching is consistently at least good in order to accelerate pupils' progress – satisfactory.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Most pupils are considerate towards each other and respond well to adults. More consistent management of behaviour helps pupils to understand the consequences of misbehaviour and the rewards for behaving well. Badges awarded for good work are worn with pride. Pupils attend regularly and are kept safe; a minor issue regarding perimeter access and egress to the school is being followed up by the governing body. All safeguarding arrangements remain secure.

## **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

Senior leaders and governors acknowledge that pupils' attainment and progress are too low and are focused on raising overall achievement. Self-evaluation identifies the actions taken to strengthen the school and includes plans to address the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. Improved assessment procedures and regular progress review meetings provide the core leadership team with a better understanding of how well pupils are progressing. This information enables them to coordinate additional support towards those who need it most. However, the role of year managers in this process and their impact is unclear. The governing body is demonstrating an improved understanding of the issues facing the school. Additional training and a newly-formed committee to monitor school improvement is enabling them to oversee the school's development more closely and hold senior leaders to account.

Whole-school training, increased opportunities for professional development and sharing of good practice with other schools is helping to add greater consistency to teaching. Monitoring of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work by senior leaders is more regular and shows that in 70% of lessons observed since September 2011, the quality of teaching was good. Observations by HMI, some carried out jointly with the headteacher, did not confirm this. Some good teaching was noted but most teaching is still satisfactory. In a small number of lessons, teaching appeared to be good, but a significant minority of pupils produced very little written work and made only limited progress. Senior leaders' observations are not sufficiently focused on the impact of the improvements made to teaching on pupils' learning and progress, or on the variable achievement of individuals and different groups of pupils in the same lessons.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Increase the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels – satisfactory.

## **External support**

Senior leaders and governors have welcomed a range of support provided by the local authority. Senior advisers have begun to monitor the progress made against a suitable statement of action, and tailor advice and training to meet the school's needs. The local authority aims for the school to be removed from special measures by December 2012.

**Priorities for further improvement:**

- Shift the focus of lesson observations from what teachers are doing to measuring the impact of teaching on the progress made by all individuals and groups of pupils in order to gain an accurate view of how well the school is improving.