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Mr M Adams  
Headteacher  
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 to your school on 27–28 June 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in 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.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

One newly qualified teacher may be appointed. As discussed with HMI, a suitable mentor and a personal support partner will be allocated to support the newly qualified teacher.

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 (ICT) 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 ICT 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 second monitoring inspection on 27–28 June 2012**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with senior and middle leaders, two members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.

#### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection visit, one teacher has left the school. Year managers have reverted back to being Year leaders. Fewer pupils are registered as disabled or with special educational needs.

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

The improved procedures to monitor pupils' progress noted at the time of the previous monitoring inspection are now embedded. Regular pupil progress meetings enable all staff to share information about individual pupils' progress and target support towards those who need it. The most recent data shows that the vast majority of pupils are making expected progress. Senior leaders anticipate that the school's own targets will be exceeded and the government's floor standards for the percentage of Year 6 pupils achieving Level 4 or above in English and mathematics will be met this year.

Better quality teaching, additional extensive revision and early interventions to support individuals and groups of pupils are all contributing towards improved rates of progress. A small but increasing proportion of pupils that have English as an additional language learn English and mathematics together in daily lessons taught by specialist staff which is aiding their progress. Improved management of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is enabling teachers to plan suitable activities and coordinate support for these pupils' learning.

The recent introduction of new resources to teach reading and writing in Years 3 and 4 has had an immediate impact on improving pupils' phonetic understanding and their enjoyment of reading, particularly low-ability pupils and those learning English as an additional language. In two lessons observed, highly structured teaching of letters and combinations of sounds in small groups of pupils of similar abilities led to good progress being made. Fast pace and regular opportunities for pupils to practise saying words together and reading in pairs accelerated their learning. This is ensuring a higher proportion of pupils gain a secure grasp of basic skills, but this is not reinforced fully in foundation subjects.

The introduction of pens for selected pupils and a focus on handwriting are improving the presentation of pupils' work. Less progress has been made in raising pupils' attainment in ICT. The school has implemented a new scheme of work, trained staff and purchased many more portable computers. Teachers have begun to incorporate these resources into their lessons but the profile of ICT remains low.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- raise attainment in English, mathematics and ICT – satisfactory.

### **The quality of teaching**

The improved progress illustrated in the school's assessment data is not always reflected in lessons. The school's monitoring shows that teaching is at least satisfactory and, in approximately half of all lessons, it is good. Joint observations carried out by senior leaders and HMI found that mostly satisfactory teaching was leading to mainly satisfactory progress. The school feels that this is so because, under scrutiny, some teachers do not teach as well as they usually do.

Significant improvements to the quality of teaching are clearly evident. Most teachers have higher expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving and are beginning to incorporate challenging tasks into lessons to meet their needs. During questioning, teachers make regular use of 'talking partners' to engage all pupils in learning. In the most effective lessons, teachers accelerate pupils' progress by providing different tasks for pupils of different abilities to complete together in small groups, by setting clear timescales for completion and by making learning interesting and enjoyable. Regular marking informs pupils of how well they are doing and pupils know their targets.

Some significant inconsistencies remain. For example, teachers are not differentiating their planning from the start of lessons, so for extended periods of time all pupils regularly end up doing the same work. Effective use of teaching assistants was observed in some lessons but, too often, they are not suitably deployed to accelerate the learning and progress of groups of pupils. Presentation of work is improving but, in a minority of lessons, pupils are not completing enough written work. Marking is identifying the next steps pupils need to take to improve but they are not given time to revisit previous work.

Progress since the last monitoring 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**

Attendance is above the national average. Well-established procedures to isolate pupils that display poor behaviour results in no pupil being excluded. Behaviour in lessons and around school is generally good. In a small minority of lessons, a few pupils lose interest and become passive when teaching fails to inspire them. Safeguarding arrangements remain secure. The governing body has initiated plans to address the minor issue regarding one of the access gates.

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

There is a greater urgency in raising achievement across the school. Data suggests that senior leaders are becoming increasingly effective in driving improvements. The headteacher, ably supported by his senior team, have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Increasingly systematic monitoring is enabling senior and middle leaders to spot underachievement, target support towards individual learners and to challenge underperformance. The governing body is holding senior leaders to account through regular meetings to review the school's progress in securing improvements.

Lesson monitoring has improved the quality of teaching but has not fully eradicated the inconsistencies that are restricting it to being satisfactory rather than consistently good. The school is still some way short of the target agreed with the local authority for all teaching to be good at this stage of the year. Currently, staff are unable to demonstrate that all teaching is good enough for the school to be removed from special measures.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

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

## **External support**

The local authority has maintained their good support for the school. Coordinated support from advisers and consultants in school, and opportunities for selected staff to attend training in another local school, have strengthened the quality of teaching. Regular meetings have taken place to moderate the school's assessment data and review the progress made against the statement of action.