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Simon Shaw
Church Eaton Endowed (VA) Primary School
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Dear Mr Shaw

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Church Eaton Endowed (VA) Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 11 October 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the members of staff, the governing body and to the pupils who spoke with me.

Since the last inspection, the teaching headteacher and a class teacher have retired. As a consequence, existing part-time teachers on the staff have increased their teaching commitment to fill these teaching vacancies. A temporary acting headteacher was appointed to the school at the beginning of April 2012 and was then appointed as the substantive headteacher later that month. The class groups have been reorganised from four classes to three mixed-age classes. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a class with Year 1 children. Years 2 and 3 are taught together as are Years 4, 5 and 6.

As a result of the inspection on 26 January 2012, 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 satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Since the last inspection, there are signs of improvement in pupils' achievement. Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in developing their understanding of the sounds that letters make (phonics) and other early literacy skills. At the end of Year 2, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics rose in 2012 to be significantly above the levels achieved nationally. Pupils currently in Years 1 and 2 are on track to reach above average levels. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is also above average in English and mathematics and exceeded the targets set by the school in 2012. More pupils are reaching the

highest level of which they are capable. However, the school has identified that pupils of average ability do not always progress as well as their peers. Nevertheless, all year groups in school are currently on track to attain at least as well as expected and many to exceed this. Though improvements made to teaching have ensured that above average levels of attainment have been maintained or are improving, the progress that pupils make continues to vary. An increasing number make good and occasionally outstanding progress, but for too many, progress continues to require improvement. Disabled pupils and those who have a special educational need make similar progress to their peers.

Some consistent strengths have been established in the quality of teaching. A new lesson planning format ensures all teachers start from assessments made of pupils' prior learning and plan to meet the needs of different abilities, rather than planning a task for each year group. The majority of teachers are making and using teacher assessments accurately and effectively, though a minority still lack skills and confidence in this regard. The improved understanding of assessment has led to higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. As one member of staff said, 'It has helped us to raise the bar'. In the best lessons, teachers check for misconceptions, address them swiftly or modify their plans and use probing questions to challenge pupils even more. This is not consistently the case. Sometimes, teachers and other adults accept and praise the first answer they are given when it is too simplistic or even incorrect. Teachers make it clear to pupils what they want them to learn in lessons and remind pupils so that they remain focused and know if they have been successful. Only very occasionally do teachers revert to presenting a list of tasks they want pupils to complete.

A well-structured system for teaching phonics is in place. Staff have embraced this with enthusiasm and only a very few require further development of their knowledge and skills to ensure they are teaching it well. Guided reading sessions take place daily. Pupils make good progress when they are in small groups under the direction of the class teacher or a teaching assistant. Often, there are well planned, meaningful activities for those who are working independently so that they also do well. This is not always the case. Pupils develop a love of reading but say there are not enough reading materials in school to meet their needs and interests.

A new and more creative approach to planning the curriculum through topics which integrate several subjects is in its early stages. Pupils say that they find this approach more engaging. One example, based on a popular book, fired their imagination and resulted in much improved quality and quantity of writing which pupils are proud to see displayed around school. Sessions called 'writing across the curriculum' have been introduced but it is still too soon to see their full impact. Pupils work hard, are respectful and well behaved throughout school. Their attendance is above average. Teachers have recognised the importance of developing good learning behaviour so that pupils can direct and extend their own learning effectively. Pupils say that they are enjoying more opportunities to carry out their own research, often using information and communication technology. They

also astutely report that they still do not get enough opportunities to solve problems for themselves in mathematics or to explain and try out their ideas independently. Teachers are still occasionally over-directing, which results, for example, in the whole class producing very similar work using a pre-determined method. Marking and feedback have improved and often provide next steps for pupils. However, comments by teachers are not always focused enough on learning or time is not given for pupils to address them.

In a relatively short time, the new headteacher has made his ambitious vision for the school and his high expectations absolutely clear. With the support of the local authority, he has swiftly set about putting leadership and management systems in place to drive school improvement forward. These include a new and more rigorous system for assessing and monitoring pupils' performance. A cycle of comprehensive monitoring activities is in place. As a result, he has a clear view of the school's work, and self-evaluation and action planning documentation is of good quality. He is accurate in his evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching and is holding teachers to account for pupils' performance. Training for staff is chosen carefully and its impact monitored closely. However, though staff are beginning to participate in monitoring and evaluation activities, leadership activities are still undertaken mainly by senior leaders and middle leaders are not yet playing their full part in improving the school's work. The governing body has been re-organised. Its members have undertaken training and now receive good quality information. They are not yet playing their full part in providing challenge to school leaders and setting the strategic direction of the school.

The statement of action and action plan prepared for Ofsted by the local authority was judged fit for purpose. The support offered by the local authority has helped the school to make satisfactory improvements in the issues identified at the last inspection. The headteacher has valued the on-going support and guidance provided by representatives of the local authority and its appointed consultants, particularly in relation to the establishment of leadership systems, developing assessment and improving teaching in literacy and numeracy.

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

Joanne Harvey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2012

- Eliminate pupils' uneven progress and make it at least consistently good by July 2012, by ensuring that teachers:
 - make effective use of assessment information when planning lessons, in order to provide work at the right level for pupils of all abilities
 - provide daily systematic teaching of early reading skills to all relevant pupils
 - use strategies to make sure pupils are actively engaged during all parts of lessons
 - make sure marking clearly identifies strengths and areas for improvement and pupils have time to respond to the feedback given
 - have higher expectations of the quality and quantity of pupils' work in subjects other than English and mathematics.

- By April 2012, make leadership and management more effective by:
 - establishing a rigorous cycle of monitoring teachers' planning, work in pupils' books and termly progress information
 - setting challenging targets each term for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics and monitoring their progress towards them
 - ensuring lesson observations focus on pupils' learning and that the feedback given clearly evaluates the impact of teaching on pupils' progress
 - providing time for subject leaders to carry out regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility
 - improving the effectiveness of the governing body in holding the school's leaders to account for pupils' performance.