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Mandy Staiano and Angela Wallis
Co-headteachers
St Catherine's Hoddesdon CofE Primary School
Haslewood Avenue
Hoddesdon
EN11 8HT

Dear Mrs Staiano and Mrs Wallis

**Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of St Catherine's
Hoddesdon CofE Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 September 2012, and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the governors and local authority representative who met with me, and to the pupils who spoke with me during the inspection.

Since the last inspection the two acting headteachers have become substantive co-headteachers. One works full time and one works the equivalent of four days a week. Three teachers left the school at the end of last academic year and five new teachers have started work in September. Two of these teachers are employed temporarily through an agency. All pupils are now taught in single-age classes.

As a result of the inspection on 11 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 good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Achievement was judged as good at the last inspection and indications are that the quality of teaching has largely been maintained. Classes have been reorganised this year so that pupils are taught in single-age classes. While it is too soon for the school to evaluate the impact of this reorganisation on pupils' achievement, lesson observations and the school's behaviour records show that the weaker behaviour seen in some classes has improved significantly and is now closer to the quality seen in all other classes. The

school has an increasingly sharp focus on identifying pupils who are falling behind so that actions can be taken to provide support and eradicate underachievement. Teachers are increasingly reflective about their practice, actively seeking ways to improve further.

The co-headteachers have been on a steep learning curve this year, developing a fuller understanding of the role of headship and developing the skills and knowledge needed to ensure all health and safety and financial regulations are adhered to. Middle leadership is developing so that more teachers are involved in driving improvements in teaching and learning. It is important that this development continues to ensure that the school continues to improve on all fronts, with leadership roles shared appropriately.

The consistency of marking is improving. Last year, staff created a shared policy for marking and feedback. Leaders have been rigorous in their monitoring of marking and feedback, ensuring a consistent approach is developed. New teachers are not yet fully up to speed with this policy and, as a result, their marking and feedback are less consistently effective than those of staff who were involved in the implementation of the policy last year.

The school and local authority have acted decisively to tackle the most pressing premises issues that were identified at the time of the last inspection. All essential works have been completed and the school holds the appropriate certification to show that this has been carried out to a competent level. Leaders and site staff have completed training to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to carry out appropriate monitoring of the school site. Risk assessments are being completed more regularly and effectively. Clear monitoring arrangements ensure that site staff are clear about what checks need to be completed and when. Increasingly accurate records are being kept to show the checks that have taken place and any actions taken. Where records are not as robust as they need to be, the school has clear plans to improve them within the current academic year. Governors have an increasingly clear overview of issues pertinent to premises and safety. These are regularly discussed at governors' meetings, with governors acting much more effectively in challenging and supporting leaders in school.

Systems for financial control have been tightened. Better procedures now ensure that appropriate checks and balances are effectively and quickly developing. The bursar is much more secure in her role and has an increasingly good understanding of the whistle-blowing policy within school. The governors are more proactive in challenging senior leaders and a culture of transparency is evident. Leaders, governors and the bursar are well aware of the parameters set out in the school's policies for financial delegation. They ensure that appropriate permissions are sought and principles of best value are adhered to. Additional checks have been developed through a monthly financial health check bought in from the local authority. This is used

increasingly effectively by the governors to confirm the budgetary situation and plan ahead with more confidence. Governors are much more involved in the decision making and setting of the school budget. While the essential safety works have been completed, it is clear that many parts of the school are in a poor state of maintenance. Governors are well aware of this and recognise the importance of planning ahead to ensure sufficient funds are made available in their budgets for ongoing maintenance.

The local authority has provided a range of effective support. Its statement of action was fit for purpose. Local authority officials completed audits of the school's finances and health and safety provision. This gave governors and leaders a clear understanding of where the immediate priorities lay. Significant additional funding was provided by the local authority to ensure the school could complete essential works quickly. The new co-headteachers and other emerging middle leaders have been supported through mentor programmes and a link with a national leader in education (NLE). Several consultants have worked alongside middle leaders to develop their capacity for evaluating teaching and learning. Governors have been supported by the local authority's governor services and finance officers.

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

Michael Sheridan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Ensure that contractors deal with the 'remedial items' regarding electrical safety identified by the local authority with the 'immediate attention' promised. Work must begin immediately.
- In order to further enhance teaching, ensure that the quality of marking consistently matches the best provision in the school.
- Reorganise the governing body's supervision of financial and property matters, in line with current best practice.
- Reorganise provision for the mixed-age Year 4/5 classes by:
 - refining curriculum provision in foundation subjects, and
 - restructuring the organisation of English and mathematics groups.