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Miss K Burns  
Headteacher  
Pells Church of England Primary School  
Landport Road  
Lewes  
BN7 2SU

Dear Miss Burns

**Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Pells Church of England Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you, your staff and pupils gave when I inspected your school on 20 September 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection.

The school has been successful in recruiting permanent teaching staff and the senior leadership team is now well established. The number of pupils with special educational needs, particularly the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement, continues to be high. The number of pupils joining and leaving the school at other than usual times remains high.

As a result of the inspection on 11–12 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.

The school knows its children very well. A high number join with low levels of literacy and emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. The progress and well-being of every individual is monitored regularly and closely. Relatively high mobility within small cohorts of pupils means that external, summative data do not always capture the progress pupils make from their starting points. However, the school's robust tracking and data show that, at the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is rising and the gap with national averages is narrowing. Teachers' understanding of age-related expectations and progression through key stages is well developed

through thorough, collaborative moderation. Improvements in teaching, including in Key Stage 2, and sharply focused interventions are accelerating pupils' progress.

Teaching is better matched to pupils' needs. Expectations for work and behaviour are generally high and met. Systematic coaching and lesson study has increased teachers' capacity to evaluate and drive pupils' progress in lessons. There are still occasions when pupils, usually higher-attaining pupils, do not move to the next level of learning when they are ready. There is also variation in the quality of support from teaching assistants. However, overall, teaching is improving and there is more that is good. Where teaching is most effective in accelerating learning:

- success criteria are clear, understood and well used by pupils
- pupils have good opportunities to evaluate their own and others' work
- questioning develops thinking skills and encourages pupils to extend their responses
- feedback to pupils from teachers and teaching assistants is precisely focused on consolidating or advancing learning.

The school provides pupils with a calm and highly supportive learning environment. Pupils work and play together happily and say they feel safe. Most enjoy learning and see the purpose of their work. The warm and consistent relationships with their permanent teachers are a crucial factor in pupils' improved engagement with learning. The behaviour management policy has been reviewed recently. Changes have been implemented successfully. Adults have quickly grasped new approaches and pupils understand the consequences of not meeting expectations. Most importantly, pupils are being guided in making the right choices for themselves. This helps them to understand the significance of social skills and develop independence in their learning.

Breaks and lunchtimes are well supervised and orderly. Pupils have access to a range of activities that structure their play and cultivate social and communication skills.

The headteacher provides strong direction to the work of the school. Her tenacious commitment to the success of every pupil underpins the shared vision of improvement. Members of the senior leadership team have grown into their roles and work together cohesively and effectively. Staff are united in their endeavour to raise standards. Management systems are rigorous. The accurate assessment of pupils' work is emerging as a strength. The tracking of pupils' progress and the very regular progress reviews ensure that any underachievement is tackled quickly. Interventions are well targeted and timely. The school has established a partnership with a special school in the locality and the sharing of expertise has increased the impact of intervention programmes. Performance management balances accountability and professional development appropriately. Safeguarding procedures meet current requirements.

Parents and carers have been enthusiastic in supporting a project to increase opportunities for pupils to read aloud. The school has run workshops for parents and carers to share strategies for helping pupils to become confident readers. The impact of these strategies, combined with teachers' intensive focus on reading, is reflected in the increasing number of pupils achieving higher levels in reading at the end of Key Stage 2. The school works hard with parents and carers to improve pupils' attendance. Year-on-year figures are edging closer to national averages.

The local authority's statement of action to support the school is clearly focused on appropriate priorities and fit for purpose. An adviser from the authority has worked sensitively and successfully with the school. Leadership capacity has increased and programmes to improve pupils' numeracy, literacy and behaviour for learning are bearing fruit.

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

Jacqueline White  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Improve the achievement of older pupils so their attainment rises to at least the national average when they leave by ensuring that lessons always:
  - provide well for pupils of differing ability
  - help pupils understand the purpose of their work and how to check their own progress towards their targets
  - involve teachers in checking that pupils are making rapid progress in lessons and that they intervene when this is not the case.
- Improve the monitoring and development of the teaching for older pupils and also in the additional intervention sessions to ensure the areas requiring improvement are securely identified and tackled, including by sharing the effective practice already in the school.
- Work even more closely with families where pupils are still regularly absent from school so the proportion involved reduces significantly.
- Provide more opportunities for structured activity at breaks and lunchtimes to reduce the number of incidents arising from boisterous play.
- Enable parents and carers of older pupils to support their children's reading more consistently so that progress in reading increases faster.