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Mrs Janet Lightfoot
St Matthew's Church of England Primary School
Linkfield Lane
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RH1 1JF

Dear Mrs Lightfoot

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of St Matthew's Church of England Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 8 November 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Could you also convey my thanks to the members of the governing body, the pupils and the representatives from the local authority.

Since the last inspection, there have been eight new teacher appointments including an Early Years Foundation Stage leader and two newly qualified teachers. There have also been two new appointments to the governing body. A seconded deputy headteacher has worked with the school since September 2012. This secondment will finish at the end of December 2012.

As a result of the inspection on 7 - 8 March 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.

At the end of the last academic year the attainment of pupils in Year 6 considerably improved. In this year, an average proportion of pupils attained Level 4 in the National Curriculum tests after several years of results being well below the national average. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 also rose although it remains slightly below the national average. Improvements at the end of Year 2 were more modest, with only a small improvement in pupils' writing. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage were at above average levels when they started in Year 1. The school has worked hard in developing pupils' reading and phonics (the sounds letters make) skills. Pupils also made improved progress in their learning,

and currently in lessons and evidence from the school's checks on progress indicate many make good progress. There is effective provision throughout the school to systematically develop pupils' use of phonics from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 6 ranging from in-class support to small group work outside of lessons. These improvements are having a positive impact on pupils' reading ability, especially the lower attainers and those from White British backgrounds who are making increased levels of progress in their reading. In the Phonic Screening Check in the last academic year, the school was significantly above the national average. In lessons pupils are given well-structured and regular support to develop their reading and writing skills. All pupils read daily. Pupils are developing their skills to work independently well and opportunities to self-assess their learning are increasing.

Teaching is rapidly improving. The good lesson planning by teachers ensures that every minute counts. Teachers are using the good assessment information to devise lessons that are appropriately pitched to the range of pupils' needs. They are given tasks that take into account their levels of ability. For example, in a well-taught Year 6 mathematics lesson pupils worked on tasks of increasing difficulty and were supported well to find the answer to quite complex equivalent fractions. Most pupils including lower attainers are encouraged and supported to work independently. However, a few pupils are not moved on quickly enough through their tasks resulting in them settling for part-completion of work when they are capable of much more.

Generally, pupils behave well in lessons and as they move around the school. They are polite and courteous to staff and to other pupils. There has not been any fixed-term exclusions for two years. Pupils say they feel safe and well supported by staff and they know who they can turn to if they have a concern. However, some pupils say that the poor behaviour of a few pupils is disrupting their learning in lessons. The school leaders have implemented sound policies to address poor behaviour and pupils are aware of the consequences. There is clear whole-school approach to tackling poor behaviour which has resulted in raising the awareness of all staff that managing poor behaviour is everyone's responsibility. Leaders have also implemented stronger systems to improve pupils' attendance and are working extensively with the parents and carers of pupils who are persistently absent. This has resulted in attendance improving from below to average levels since the last inspection.

Leaders have worked effectively to raise pupils' attainment, improve the quality of teaching and improve attendance. The school's self-evaluation and improvement plan is sharply focused on raising pupils' attainment across the school. Targets set are challenging although realistic and the pupil progress meetings held with teachers are ensuring that these targets are being achieved. The fine grading of lesson observations has resulted in a higher proportion of good lessons as senior leaders are focusing on the right aspects of teaching that need to be improved. Assessing the performance of different groups of pupils takes high priority. Better planning and teaching have enabled pupils, especially those who speak English as an additional

language and those who are of White British heritage, to achieve better. These new approaches are having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. The effective checks that take place in lessons and the close scrutiny of pupils' attainment of every class mean that those requiring additional support are known to senior leaders. As a result appropriate support is implemented swiftly for these pupils. Middle leaders are developing their roles satisfactorily, especially the subject leaders for literacy and numeracy. However, subject action plans lack clear ways of gauging success and deadlines resulting in some actions losing momentum. Members of the governing body are developing their knowledge and understanding of the school's work well. There is an increased level of challenge to leaders especially on how well pupils achieve. Governors do not always have a clear understanding of how well middle leaders drive improvement.

The local authority and the diocese have successfully arranged the right services to support the school. They have contributed well to the improvements in teaching and pupils' attainment. The realistic statement of action has been instrumental in enabling the senior team to galvanise the staff to raise pupils' outcomes and drive through necessary improvements to teaching. The statement of action is monitored well by the local authority.

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

Samantha Morgan-Price
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Accelerate pupils' achievement so that it is at least good or better by:
 - improving the progress of those from White British backgrounds and of lower-attaining pupils' in reading and writing by systematically building their phonics skills
 - improving writing in Key Stage 1 and strengthening pupils' ability to spell accurately throughout Key Stages 1 and 2
 - improving attendance by working closely with families to ensure they appreciate the impact of regular attendance on their children's future.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all pupils make good or better progress in lessons by December 2012 by:
 - ensuring there is a strong focus on building reading and writing skills in literacy lessons
 - using assessment information to ensure lessons build upon pupils' previous learning
 - providing opportunities for lower-attaining pupils to read every day.

- Ensure all leaders and managers evaluate the impact of initiatives on improving the academic outcomes for pupils rigorously by July 2012 by:
 - ensuring that the school improvement plan has clear targets for improving pupils' attainment
 - ensuring that lesson monitoring consistently focuses on how well teaching meets the learning needs of different groups, including White British pupils, and accelerates pupils' progress if they fall behind.