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7 December 2012

Mrs C Prior  
Headteacher  
St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
Church Road  
Great Yeldham  
Halstead  
CO9 4PT

Dear Mrs Prior

**Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Great Yeldham**

Following my visit to your school on 5–6 December 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 on 8 March 2012. 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 – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

The school is allowed to appoint one newly qualified teacher should the opportunity arise.

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 Executive Director for Schools, Children and Families Essex County Council and the Diocese of Chelmsford.

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics so that pupils make consistently good progress throughout their time at school by:
  - making full use of assessment information to plan and deliver work that is appropriately matched to pupils' different capabilities and which challenges and extends them
  - ensuring that learning objectives set out what pupils are expected to learn and not just the activities to be carried out
  - maintaining a brisk pace in lessons
  - ensuring that pupils do not sit passively listening for lengthy periods by making sure they have more opportunities to get on with writing and practical activities
  - providing effective additional curriculum support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, particularly in mathematics
  - giving all pupils clear guidance, through marking, in every subject that shows them what they need to do to improve their work.
  
- Develop more robust and effective management systems through:
  - ensuring that the school development plan incorporates measurable targets against which the governing body can gauge the school's progress
  - using the school development plan, as a management tool at each governing body meeting, to measure how much the school has improved, to question the school's leaders about the school's performance and to initiate changes where milestones are not being achieved
  - focusing lesson observations on pupils' learning and rates of progress
  - rigorously following up the points for development identified by school leaders from lesson observations, the scrutiny of assessment information, the analysis of pupils' work, and by keeping an appropriate written record so that improvement can be tracked
  - reviewing the organisation of phonics sessions for younger pupils so that learning is much more closely matched to pupils' prior attainment and that all staff are trained to model correctly the way that letters should be sounded out
  - working together within the school and with staff in neighbouring schools, to assure the accuracy of teachers' assessments, including those of children's skills and knowledge when they start in Reception.

**Special measures: monitoring of St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Great Yeldham****Report from the second monitoring inspection on 5–6 December 2012****Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, including seven lessons observed jointly with the headteacher, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, learning support assistants, three governors and a representative of the local authority.

**Context**

The headteacher took up post in September 2012. There have been no other significant staff changes since the last monitoring inspection, but the Year 5/6 class teacher has resigned and will be replaced, in January, by a teacher on a temporary appointment.

**Achievement of pupils at the school**

Published data confirms the significant increases in attainment and achievement made by the school in 2012 when compared with the previous year's results. Standards in the Key Stage 2 tests in English and mathematics rose to broadly average, and the proportion of pupils making the expected two levels of progress was also in line with the national figures. Encouragingly, the proportion making three levels progress and the proportion achieving the higher levels in English and mathematics both exceeded the national figures. Standards in Key Stage 1 assessments were, on the other hand, comparatively low, but this reflects an overly cautious approach to teacher assessment rather than any particular weaknesses in the school's provision.

The school's assessment information, supported by evidence from the monitoring inspection, indicates that pupils' rates of progress have continued to accelerate since the start of the new school year. Naturally, some pupils make more rapid gains than others, but any discrepancy is quickly picked up and steps are taken to support individuals in danger of falling behind. For example, carefully targeted support for a small group of Year 3 pupils this term has quickly boosted the standard of their writing and brought them back towards the levels expected.

In the majority of lessons observed during the visit, the quality of learning was good. Teachers know the individual capabilities of their pupils and what they should achieve in each session, so they set work that is suitably difficult for each group. On occasions, the work is rather too difficult for some pupils to do without better guidance or support.

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

- raise attainment in English and mathematics so that pupils make consistently good progress throughout their time at school – good.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching continues to strengthen, particularly in those aspects of English and mathematics that have been the focus of whole-school training. The recent review, undertaken by the local authority, confirms this improvement. One notable improvement is the increased emphasis on pupils working independently so they spend less time listening to the teacher or their peers. It is not unusual for groups of older pupils to be given a problem to solve or a task to complete collaboratively; teachers and other adults circulate to support and extend pupils' learning, but well-planned resources provide the structure to enable pupils to work things out for themselves. This approach was best illustrated in the mathematics lesson in Year 4/5, where pupils were making calculations to keep within a certain budget and the group resources were prepared with impressive detail.

Teachers have also developed the learning environment to promote pupils' independence. Working walls and 'magpie' boards encourage pupils to gather and share ideas, such as new vocabulary, when they are drafting their own writing. In the Reception class, learning zones have been created so that children have better access to resources and are encouraged to choose their own learning activities and develop initiative and independence. Pupils respond to the more lively teaching and enjoy taking more responsibility for their own learning, for example by responding to the guidance that teachers give when marking their English work. Indeed, marking continues to develop as a notable strength: teachers are conscientious, and often meticulous, in correcting work and setting out precisely what pupils need to do to improve.

Weaknesses in teaching have been addressed, and there is a better balance of teacher-talk and pupil participation in lessons. However, teaching still requires some improvement. The quality of pupils' learning was uneven when teachers' expositions were imprecise or when activities needed a sharper focus. In some lessons, for example, teachers could have modelled more clearly what they expected pupils to do so that pupils' independent investigations were more purposeful or successful.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

As reported previously, the pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes are strong features of lessons, and help explain their improved learning and progress. Teachers nurture these positive attitudes by establishing a good climate for learning and by planning activities that arouse pupils' curiosity and interest. Pupils enjoy

investigating for themselves and solving problems, and are quickly absorbed by challenging activities. Children in Reception were awed almost as much as the inspector by the 'magic potions' that the teacher created in her cauldron, and could not wait to brew their own and construct their very own flying broomsticks.

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

The headteacher has settled quickly into her new role and immediately shared her 'expectations of excellence' against which judgements will be made. Apart from bringing a calm assurance to everyday management, the headteacher has skilfully steered school improvement by galvanising all the staff and promoting an impressive team ethic. Teachers work together to improve their teaching, for example through shared 'lesson study'; learning support assistants are consulted and are more closely involved in lesson planning; and staff are given opportunities to observe best practice in other schools. Staff are working very hard, but also feel well supported.

Systems for monitoring the work of the school are well structured and sensibly involve senior leaders and governors. Checks include lesson observations, evaluations of lesson planning, book scrutinies and pupil progress meetings. The headteacher is steadily building the school's capacity to improve by developing the management and leadership roles of senior leaders. Subject leadership is beginning to develop, but is not yet strategic.

Under the stewardship of the Chair of the Governing Body, governance is developing as a key strength. Governors are keen to support the school and also effectively hold senior leaders to account. They have a very good grasp of the school's performance and their own role in steering its further development.

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

- develop more robust and effective management systems – good.

### **External support**

The school has continued to take full advantage of the good support provided by the local authority, including training for governors, one-to-one support from an advanced skills teacher and subject guidance in mathematics. The headteacher has also drawn on the expertise of other schools (and professional partner headteacher) and the diocese, for example to strengthen the provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The recent review undertaken by local authority consultants confirmed the positive impact of this support and guidance.