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4 March 2013

Mr Mark Adams  
Headteacher  
St Nicholas Priory Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School  
St Nicholas Road  
Great Yarmouth  
Norfolk  
NR30 1NL

Dear Mr Adams

**Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to St Nicholas Priory Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 1 March 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

**Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, the two assistant headteachers and the advance skills teacher, the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, the school's local authority adviser, and a group of pupils. The school's improvement and development plan was evaluated.

**Context**

Three teachers joined the school at the start of this term to replace those that had left in December 2012. The school recently received confirmation that their results for Key Stage 2 pupils in 2012 were the most improved in Norfolk and the 50<sup>th</sup> most improved in the country.

## Main findings

The headteacher and governors feel that the inspection judgements underestimated the impact of the work that the school had done on raising pupils' achievement. Nevertheless, they continue to focus on further improvement and are highly determined to be recognised as providing a good education for the pupils.

The school's improvement and development plan accurately reflects the points for improvement identified during the inspection. The plan shows how the things that enabled the school to no longer require special measures will be consolidated, refined and built upon over the next 18 months. Discussions with the senior team, confirmed in discussions with pupils, clearly show that systems and procedures have been further refined this term. These refinements happen through looking more frequently at what assessment information is telling teachers and leaders about the performance of pupils, particularly about the performance of different groups of pupils. For example, the underachievement of some pupils in reading and spelling has led to reorganisation of groups and resources. The focus on improving pupils' writing skills in literacy lessons has been extended by making sure that topic work in the afternoons provides pupils with opportunities to write longer pieces of work. Leaders are using the current series of lesson observations to check the difference this is making to pupils. This is helping to make sure that teachers are more accountable for explaining the progress of pupils in their class and for identifying what they will do next to support those not making sufficient progress.

Interrogation of assessment information by the senior team has identified further areas for development, for example, the deployment and skills of support staff. This is, very sensibly, to be linked with the next part of the training for subject leaders. Governors have committed to considerable investment in technology to further encourage pupils to read at home and school. Senior leaders have sensibly taken time to make sure that the technology, the books available for pupils to read and the way that this will be used are fit for purpose, and ready to be rolled out in the very near future.

Pupils are very clear about the things that have changed since the beginning of this term. They say that they enjoy the new Friday mathematics lessons, which focus on systematically developing pupils' skills in response to issues identified at the inspection. Pupils say that teachers mark their work more thoroughly and expect them to do something about the comments made. Overwhelmingly, pupils say that they are expected to work hard and to reach tough targets.

The governing body has had some training from the local authority and plan a full review of governance in June. Governors say that they are better informed about the school's work and this is confirmed through the minutes of their meetings, which show that they have asked for, and received, additional information from senior leaders. Although the school's improvement and development plan identifies actions

for governors to take, this is not detailed enough. The governing body does not have its own action plan.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommends that further action is taken to:

- specify in greater detail the actions that the governing body will take to develop their roles and responsibilities, and to demonstrate how their plans will contribute to improving pupils' performance.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The local authority has confidence that senior leaders have the skills to rapidly move the school forward, as was found to be the case when the inspection resulted in the school no longer requiring special measures. The school draws upon external support well and is not dependent on it to lead improvements. For example, support from the school's adviser was recently used to validate the work of subject leaders, and links with Sheringham Community Primary School have worked well to help senior leaders reflect on and refine their practice.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Norfolk local authority and the Diocese of Norwich.

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**