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13 June 2013

Mrs Helen Gill  
Headteacher  
St Mary's Church of England Primary School,  
Stockers Farm Road  
Rickmansworth  
WD3 1NY

Dear Mrs Gill

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Rickmansworth**

Following my visit to your school on 12 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 on 14 February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

#### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you and your deputy, the majority of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan, the headteacher's first report to the governing body since the previous inspection, and other related documents were evaluated.

HMI invited the senior leaders to conduct the joint observation of two lessons, during these lessons the inspector evaluated a sample of the pupils' work. HMI provided professional feedback to both teachers.

#### **Context**

Three teachers are leaving the school at the end of the summer term, one experienced teacher and one newly qualified teacher have been appointed for September 2013; the school is seeking to make one further appointment.

## **Main findings**

Pupils arrive in school with levels of literacy and numeracy that are significantly above average and leave Year 6 with levels of attainment that are also significantly above average. However, not enough pupils make good progress to reach the highest levels possible. The school's current evaluation notes that four out of ten lessons are not yet good and so the current reorganisation of teaching provides senior staff and governors the opportunity to ensure good teaching is available in all classes.

In the two lessons visited by HMI it was clear that the pupils' levels of literacy were at least two terms ahead of what might be expected for their age. One lesson failed to offer sufficient challenge and therefore required improvement. The other lesson could have been outstanding if pupils had been given the opportunity to write much earlier in the lesson. Teaching assistants were not always actively engaged in these lessons. Teaching needs to focus on the quality of learning and the progress pupils are making.

HMI spent time discussing with senior staff the actions taken to improve provision since the last inspection. A clear record of lessons observations now exists but in some cases the personal annotations added by the senior team indicate that the judgement given might have been too generous. In a review of the lessons observed the views expressed by the senior staff broadly concurred with the judgements given by the inspector. Staff development needs to focus on the rapid engagement of pupils in challenging work and the effective use of teaching assistant support.

HMI led a discussion with the governing body on the way governors might form an accurate and independent view of the quality of teaching and the importance on meeting the criteria for a 'good school' as soon as possible.

In the headteachers view the school's admission criteria, derived from diocesan guidance, would prevent it admitting a pupil into the Reception class who had not attended some form of nursery provision. If this is correct, such action would run contrary to equalities legislation.

The school has addressed many of the organisational issues that required improvement at the last inspection. It must now concentrate on improving learning and teaching.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

The school should take further action to:

- Use the access facilitated by HMI to the Ofsted: 'English and Mathematics: getting to Good' courses to improve pupil progress.
- Use the effective support provided by the local authority to ensure good teaching is available in all classes.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. HMI will maintain contact with the school.

### **External support**

Senior staff have recently replaced the independent external support criticised in the previous inspection report and bought into the effective support provided by the Hertfordshire School Improvement team.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Hertfordshire.

Yours sincerely

David Jones  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**