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26 September 2013

Mr T Bennett  
Interim Executive Headteacher  
St John's Church of England Primary School  
Peel Grove  
London  
E2 9LR

Dear Mr Bennett

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of St John's Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit with Ann Debono Her Majesty's Inspector to your school on 24 and 25 September 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the Diocese of London and the Director of Children's Services for Tower Hamlets.

Yours sincerely

Samantha Morgan-Price  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Improve teaching in English and mathematics by making sure that all teachers:
  - make better use of assessments to plan lessons that meet the needs and abilities of all pupils
  - check pupils' progress closely to ensure that all pupils are given good levels of academic challenge and support
  - mark pupils' work effectively so that pupils know what they need to do to improve
  - have high expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving
  - provide better support in lessons for disabled pupils and those with special education needs, so that their work is more accurately matched to their needs
  - provide more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their literacy and numeracy skills when learning in other subjects.
- Strengthen the capacity of leaders and managers to improve how well the school does by :
  - making sure that the quality of teaching is rigorously checked so that it leads to improvements in pupils' achievement
  - improving the quality of teaching by using a range of strategies, including good practice, coaching and mentoring
  - introducing improvement plans that have a sharper focus on raising standards in English and mathematics, including setting more-challenging academic targets
  - checking, reviewing and evaluating the school's work more rigorously.
- Increase the impact of the governing body on school improvement by making sure that it:
  - holds school leaders robustly to account for improving the school's performance
  - it becomes more actively involved in deciding the school's future
  - uses specific funding such as the pupil premium wisely so that those pupils who it is intended to benefit achieve well

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 24–25 September 2013**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, groups of pupils and a group of parents and carers, the Chair and another member of the Interim Executive Board, two representatives from the local authority and a representative from the Diocese of Southwark. Inspectors heard lower-ability pupils read from Year 6 and scrutinised English and mathematics books from all year groups.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection, four teachers have left the school and four new teaching staff have been appointed. New appointments include an Early Years Foundation Stage Coordinator. In addition to this, a Year 5 teacher has been temporarily seconded from the local partner school.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

At the end of the last academic year, school leaders were successful in halting the significant underachievement of Year 6 pupils. In this year, pupils made reasonable progress and attained average standards. Pupils in Year 2 did not make strong progress. The fastest progress for this group was in reading, but they made slower progress in mathematics. Across the school, only three out of the six Year groups made accelerated progress, and in lessons observed, pupils were weakest in mathematics. The results of the Year 1 phonics (the sounds letters make) screening check for the last academic year show that pupils answered a higher proportion of questions correctly when compared to the previous year. The school's focus on reading has made a big difference. With the exception of Year 1, reading levels have improved throughout the school. In lessons, pupils make variable progress across subjects and year groups. Pupils are beginning to assess their performance in lessons, by stating what they found easy and what work is more challenging. This is being undertaken well by some pupils.

The most-able pupils and those who are disabled or have special educational needs make slower progress than others in some year groups. However, the gap is closing as pupils make progress through the school.

### **The quality of teaching**

The senior leadership team have made strong efforts to address the weakest teaching, but teaching remains of variable quality. Although good teaching was seen during the inspection, there is some that does not enable pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. Teaching has improved notably in reading and a good phonics lesson was observed in Year 2. This lesson was well structured to

address the different abilities of pupils. The improved level of teachers' planning means that they are now identifying pupils' different needs and abilities. These plans are not always followed through, though, as in too many lessons they are not checking the progress of pupils carefully enough. As a result, progress slows, as work is not precisely matched to pupils' abilities. Too few are making accelerated progress; this is due to teachers not having high enough expectations of what pupils are capable of, or a clear understanding of what attainment levels pupils can reach. Too often, teaching lacks challenge and pace. Few examples were seen where teachers plan for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. Marking is generally undertaken regularly, and some excellent examples were seen where comments gave pupils a clear understanding of what they needed to do next to improve their work. This is not typical; too often, the quality of the guidance given does not help pupils understand how to improve their work. Consequently, some are making the same errors. Too few pupils know their levels of attainment or how to improve their performance. The ongoing training and development of teaching assistants is improving their contribution to pupils' learning in lessons. They are more active in helping those who are stuck and in supporting teachers by encouraging pupils to discuss their learning. Pupils with special educational needs have better support in lessons, which is helping them to learn better. Additional adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved their contribution to children's learning and achievement. They are more effectively assessing and supporting children. The use of the new International Primary Curriculum is starting to add more structure and variety to lessons that are not English or mathematics. However, it is too early to assess the full impact on raising pupils' achievement or increasing their interest or engagement.

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

Pupils' behaviour continues to improve, although they are sometimes too passive in lessons. They feel safe and well supported by adults in school. Playground monitors are proud of their roles in which they can help others who are unhappy or have concerns. Pupils have a good awareness of bullying and know it is not confined to physical harm. They say that poor behaviour is dealt with swiftly and they appreciate the 'Buck' reward system where they are given dollar certificates for good achievements in their work, or for behaving well. Attendance has continued to rise and is above average.

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

Since the last monitoring inspection, senior leaders have worked well to remove a large amount of weak teaching, to improve the achievement of Year 6 pupils and increase pupils' reading levels across the school. They are more frequently checking the quality of teaching, but some actions implemented have not had a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching. There have been good improvements in the teaching of reading and phonics. although there is insufficient rigour or speed in some actions taken. The school needs to prioritise the steps required to improve teaching quickly from the many measures listed in the Raising Achievement Plan.

The school's judgement on how well it is doing is not always clear from its plan. Too many actions do not support swift improvements or some milestones are too vague. Some targets for teaching and achievement need to be clearer. The use of coaching and mentoring has successfully improved the skills of adults supporting learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, some teachers require more rigorous and targeted support to improve their standard of teaching. The capacity at senior leadership is improving. There is much stronger leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage and there have been good actions taken to improve English, especially reading, although stronger actions need to be taken to improve pupils' achievement in mathematics throughout the school.

The Interim Executive Board has increased its regularity of checking the school's actions. Checking is also more detailed, as members are looking more closely at the school's major concerns. For example, they have requested more precise information on the use of pupil premium and an early update on the progress in mathematics. The structures to hold the executive headteacher to account have been reviewed, but the level of checking of the other senior leaders' work is not thorough enough. Members have been too slow in establishing the future status of the school, which in turn has affected what permanent senior leadership structure will be implemented. This has to be undertaken as a matter of priority.

### **External support**

The local authority has maintained its effective level of checking the school's progress. Good support has been given to ensure teachers' checking of pupils' attainment is accurate. There has also been good support to develop the capacity of some senior leaders. However, more support is required for school leaders to improve teaching more quickly. The partner school has increased its support to improve the capacity of some senior leaders. Its contribution to improving the weak Early Years Foundation Stage provision has been highly effective. The diocese has made a good assessment of the school's position and knows well the progress leaders have made, but the scrutiny of the school's work is undertaken too infrequently.