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23 October 2013

Steve Bassett  
Interim headteacher  
Stansted Church of England Primary School  
Malthouse Road  
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Dear Mr Bassett

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Stansted Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 22 October 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in July 2013.

**Evidence**

During this inspection, I met with you, three members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I had a telephone discussion with the Director of Education from the Diocese of Rochester. You also provided documents such as information about pupils' achievement, recent governing body minutes, and an account of actions taken since the inspection. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan were evaluated.

## **Context**

There have been major changes since the July inspection. You joined the school in September as the interim headteacher. A drop in the number of pupils means that the number of classes has reduced from four to three. Two teachers left the school at the end of the summer term and one teacher is new to the school.

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

You are providing more stable senior leadership this term and have established positive relationships and open communication with parents and governors. This is important because parents are rightly concerned about the current situation and the future of the school. You have established expectations about the sort of activities that teachers should be providing. For example, pupils now have regular opportunities to produce pieces of extended writing and teachers are making more use of the school's good range of ICT equipment. You have also established an accurate baseline of pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics. The checks on how well pupils are achieving have not always been accurate or discussed with parents, governors or staff. This information has now been shared and there have been discussions about how well pupils are currently achieving and the progress that can be expected during this year. At the moment, this tends to focus on progress from the end of Key Stage 1. However, there is a need to ensure that targets for improvement are ambitious enough and take into account the legacy of underachievement caused by previous weaknesses in teaching in the Reception and Key Stage 1 classes. It is also important to make sure that action is taken to urgently address remaining weaknesses in these classes so that, for example, improvements are implemented in the teaching of early reading and phonics.

You have established a monitoring and evaluation plan which builds on the local authority's statement of action. This usefully tracks whether actions are taking place and what difference they are making. However, the evaluation section is limited because the impact is not being checked rigorously or regularly enough. Most of your monitoring of teaching and learning this term has been informal, and although you report that there have been improvements in all of the areas identified for improvement at the time of the previous inspection, there is no clear evidence to support this statement. For example, there has only been one set of formal lesson observations since September and, of the four lessons observed, two were judged to be inadequate and two required improvement. Aspects such as low expectations, incorrect pitch and slow pace of learning are reported as common weaknesses. Pupils' books have not been checked to see whether, on a day-to-day basis, the quality of teaching and learning is better than that seen during the observations. This suggests that improvements are not as rapid as you believe them to be.

Governors take a keen interest in the school and are determined that they will help in its journey out of special measures. A review of governance was carried out following the inspection. The review identifies a number of strengths but also some serious weaknesses. The most important of these weaknesses is the governors' lack of effectiveness in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of school improvement plans. Governors have not yet established an effective system for doing this. They plan to set up a small group which will meet very regularly and focus specifically on post-Ofsted improvement.

Local authority colleagues have been working intensively with the school for some time and know the school well. They secured the services of an interim headteacher for the coming year and are providing appropriate advisory and consultant support for leadership, including governance, and for teaching and learning. The authority is also fulfilling its monitoring and evaluation function rigorously. The records from the most recent meeting identify clearly where progress is being made but also where weaknesses are not being tackled quickly enough. The local authority statement of action contains a useful plan of action to tackle weaknesses, with milestones for improvement against which progress can be measured. Parts of the plan are a bit wordy and unnecessarily complex given the size of the school and would benefit from simplifying and clarifying. The school is a member of a collaborative group of local schools and has benefited from senior leadership support from this group during the summer term. Colleagues from the group continue to provide a range of support such as joint lesson observations, moderation of assessments and regular coaching to improve teaching and learning. The school remains heavily dependent on this external support.

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

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

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Kent and the Diocese of Rochester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**