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Mary Westley  
Executive Headteacher  
Hormead Church of England (VA) Primary School  
Great Hormead  
Buntingford  
Hertfordshire  
SG9 0NR

Dear Ms Westley

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Hormead Church of England (VA) Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 30 April 2014 with Paul Lawrence, Her Majesty's Inspector, 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 on 9–10 January 2014.

#### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plans were evaluated.

#### **Context**

The previous headteacher resigned after the last inspection. As executive headteacher, you are on loan temporarily from another school for three days each week. The senior teacher takes responsibility for the school on the other two days. The recruitment process to appoint a new full-time headteacher is underway. Two teachers left the school last term: temporary arrangements are in place to cover the classes for the remainder of this school year. Two new teachers have been

appointed to start on 1 September 2014. The local authority, the diocese and the governing body have agreed to alter the current upper age limit by two years. From September 2014 the school will become a first school with pupils transferring to middle school at the end of Year 4.

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

With support from the local authority, the governing body has taken suitable action to address weaknesses in leadership and management using formal procedures for managing performance appropriately. The local authority is providing advice throughout the process of recruiting a new full-time headteacher. In the meantime, the local authority has arranged for your employment on a temporary basis to move the school forward quickly. In recruiting new staff, governors will not compromise in seeking to appoint applicants of suitable calibre to meet the school's needs. Recruitment and vetting checks for intended appointees reflect the Department for Education's guidance on employing new staff. Even so, leaders are not rigorously checking that paperwork is completed on time and information is transferred in full onto the school's single central register (a single record showing all the checks that they make).

In a matter of weeks you have already made some necessary and useful changes. The system you have introduced for tracking pupils' progress ensures that staff and governors can access data and interpret it quickly. Pupil progress meetings are being used to check that all pupils are making better progress. You have reissued the policy for marking pupils' work and you are ensuring that it is being implemented consistently. The quality of teaching is checked regularly and this is leading to improvement, particularly in raising teachers' expectations for pupils' achievement. A new approach to writing has been launched recently to provide more opportunities for pupils to write at length, although it is too soon to see discernible improvement.

The local authority has devised and implemented a single plan of action to help the school to focus on the key issues for action arising from the inspection. The plan clearly outlines suitable actions to address these issues, and parents and carers have been informed of them. It does not, however, provide sufficient detail for the next school year to secure continuous improvement so that the target date set for the school's removal from special measures is achieved. In addition, the targets for pupils' attainment and progress are not ambitious or challenging enough to reflect good achievement. The statement of action proposes swift and substantial assistance with school development planning but this has not happened. The school's plans for improvement are unhelpful. For example, there are three to keep track of rather than one: none are aligned closely to the statement of action; and they are not succinct with a clear focus on outcomes for the pupils.

An external review of governance is due imminently to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved. It will include the school's use of the government's pupil premium grant (additional funding for pupils in receipt of free school meals and those looked after by the local authority). The Chair of the Governing Body is keen to act on subsequent recommendations. Governors are fulfilling their duty to keep parents and carers informed of changes and improvements through the school's journey out of special measures. Parents and carers now have a direct and confidential channel of communication to the headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body through Parents' Voice on the school's website. The website is currently being updated to ensure that all statutory information is available.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plans are not 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 Hertfordshire and the Diocese of St Albans. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**