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26 June 2015

Mr Christopher Dale  
Headteacher  
St Nicholas Church of England (Controlled) Primary School  
Fairfield Road  
New Romney  
TN28 8BP

Dear Mr Dale

**Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of St Nicholas Church of England (Controlled) Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 26 June 2015, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in May 2014. 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 the serious weaknesses designation.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona Bridger-Wilkinson  
**Seconded Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2014**

- Improve the quality of teaching so it is at least typically good by:
  - improving the teaching of phonics (knowledge of letters and their sounds) to lower-attaining pupils in Key Stage 1 and ensuring that teachers help pupils to apply phonics skills when reading and writing
  - systematically teaching pupils how to improve their grammar, punctuation and spelling
  - using assessment information accurately to plan lessons which are hard enough for the more-able pupils and develop lower-attaining pupils' skills quickly
  - routinely checking during lessons to see if pupils find tasks too hard or too easy
  - ensuring teaching assistants enable lower-attaining pupils to have the skills and confidence to do as much as they can for themselves.
- Raise pupils' attainment in Key Stages 1 and 2, including for those supported through additional funding, by:
  - improving pupils' progress in writing, especially for boys, pupils with special educational needs and lower-attaining pupils
  - increasing the proportion making good progress in reading and writing in Key Stage 1 and in mathematics in Key Stage 2
  - improving pupils' spelling and their ability to apply phonics, write in sentences and form their letters correctly
  - ensuring lower-attaining pupils practise their sounds before reading their books and are heard to read more regularly.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - developing more robust procedures to check the attainment and progress of different groups as pupils go through the school
  - ensuring the checks made by school leaders identify the impact of teaching on how well different groups are learning
  - enabling subject leaders to play a full part in improving English and mathematics teaching and learning across the school
  - ensuring the governing body is able to evaluate the impact of teaching and other provision on the achievement of different groups, including pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding, so they are better able to challenge school leaders
  - ensuring the school improvement plan shows more precisely how governors will check on the impact of initiatives on improving achievement.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order

to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 26 June 2015**

### **Evidence**

The inspector met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the Chair and members of the Interim Executive Board (IEB), two representatives of the local authority and the subject leader for English. The inspector visited all the classes with the headteacher to observe teaching, talk to pupils and look at their work. The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's view of its own performance, pupils' progress data and the school's checks on the suitability of adults working with children. The inspector concentrated on evaluating how well leaders at all levels are raising standards.

### **Context**

Since the first monitoring inspection in September 2014, the headteacher, who was in post at the time of the last inspection, has left and interim headship arrangements were made between January and June 2015. A permanent headteacher has very recently taken up post. He is working in the school for two days each week this term and will be full time at the school from September. Eight teachers have left the school and three have joined. Two classes are currently covered by temporary staffing arrangements. There is a new Chair of the IEB.

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

Members of the IEB know the school well and have been key in working with the range of senior leaders who have been at the school over the past year. They, together with the deputy headteacher, have provided much needed stability and have successfully maintained the focus on improving standards. Due to many staff changes, it has been difficult to introduce and then embed changes. However, leaders have worked effectively to put a number of clear policies and systems in place.

Senior leaders are clear about the strengths and weaknesses in teaching. The quality of teaching has improved but leaders are well aware that more remains to be done to ensure that all pupils do as well as they should. Overall, attainment has risen at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. In particular, there has been an improvement in writing in all year groups as a result of leaders' actions.

The recently appointed English coordinator is helping support senior leaders raise standards. She has produced a helpful document on handwriting expectations and has introduced 'clued spelling' to support pupils to improve their spelling. A mathematics coordinator will join the school in September to further strengthen the middle leadership of the school.

The headteacher has ambitious plans for changes to the curriculum from September to make it more exciting, active and meaningful. He recognises that, with the large number of new staff joining the school, these changes will need to be planned for meticulously and that a comprehensive induction programme will be required. Planning for these changes is underway.

### **Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- The learning environment has improved throughout the school. Shared areas are tidier and more welcoming. Classrooms look brighter, enhanced by displays that are relevant to the areas the pupils are working on. They include examples of pupils' writing, showing that it is valued. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children have more opportunities for writing, for example in the role play garden centre in the outdoor area, which are helping to raise standards.
- Information on pupils achievement is more reliable as it has been checked by leaders. Staff now use this information to help them plan next steps in pupils' learning so that work is matched to their needs.
- There is a new feeling of optimism and positivity throughout the school. One member of staff said, 'People were previously doing things because they had to; now they are doing things because they want to.'
- Pupils move around the school sensibly and listen attentively in assembly. Many are keen to talk to the new headteacher, greeting him enthusiastically by name. Pupils are ready to learn.
- A marking policy has recently been agreed and implemented by staff. Marking is becoming informative. It helps pupils to know what they need to do to improve their work.
- Where it has been possible to deliver additional support, pupils in receipt of additional government funding have made as good as or better progress than their peers.

### **Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is still below the minimum standards expected by the government.
- Planning this year has been short term due to the frequent changes of leadership. Leaders have struggled to measure the success of their initiatives and to plan further action, for the longer term, based on evidence.

- Staff absence is high. This is slowing the rate of improvement in teaching and learning. Pupils in receipt of additional funding have been particularly badly affected.

### **External support**

The local authority swiftly secured an interim headteacher to cover the departure of the substantive headteacher. The local authority provides useful intensive help for the school's leaders in supporting the monitoring of teaching and progress towards identified targets. Support for teachers has included the provision of a mathematics consultant working on 'Maths Learning Journeys' with Year 2 pupils. This is having a positive impact on their achievement.