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8 July 2015

Miss Alison Forster  
Acting Headteacher  
St Mark's CofE Primary School  
Alexandra Street  
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Dear Miss Forster

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of St Mark's CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 7 July 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 recent section 5 inspection.

This visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2015.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the acting headteacher, the proposed executive headteacher, a group of middle leaders, three members of the governing body, a small group of pupils and a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

### **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection in March, the headteacher has resigned and left the school. You have been appointed as the acting headteacher and the proposed executive headteacher is currently working alongside you. The school, Diocese of Manchester, Diocese of Liverpool and the local authority are in the process of

consulting on plans to federate formally St Mark's CofE Primary School with Atherton St George's CofE Primary School from September 2015. A staffing reorganisation has taken place. Two teachers are leaving the school at the end of this academic year.

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

Since your appointment as acting headteacher, you have set about guiding the school on the journey of securing improvement with tenacity. Your efforts have been bolstered by the support of a national leader of education from Tyldesley Primary School and a local leader of education from Marus Bridge Primary School. Since May, improvements have gathered further momentum with the addition to the school team of the proposed executive headteacher.

You have wasted no time in setting about raising teachers' expectations and establishing a new culture of accountability. You have introduced regular and robust checks on the quality of teaching. Following lesson observations, learning walks and checks on pupils' work, you provide teachers with clear feedback, outlining areas for immediate improvement. When necessary you follow this up with further observations. Where teachers have acted upon your feedback, improvements are clear to see. However, inconsistencies remain as other teachers have been slow to implement the changes required of them.

You have utilised the support of the national leader of education to good effect. You have set up professional partnerships so that all teachers have worked alongside and observed teachers from Tyldesley Primary School. Consequently, some teachers now have raised expectations of what pupils can achieve. There are also early indications that, in some classes, the teaching of spelling and punctuation has also improved.

With the support of a specialist leader of education from Westbridge Teaching School, senior leaders have introduced a new behaviour system. Pupils speak highly of these changes. They say that behaviour has improved significantly and that disruptions to learning are now rare. Systems for recording and monitoring serious behaviour incidents have also been strengthened.

Efforts to introduce more interesting content to the curriculum, and enthuse learners, are showing the early signs of making a difference to pupils' achievement. In Year 6, for example, the use of a quality reading book inspired many pupils to produce a range of good quality writing.

Governors have responded positively to the section 5 inspection findings. They have taken care to work with the local authority and diocese to establish proposals to federate formally with a local school from September. They have worked with a

national leader of governance to enhance their skills and, consequently, have a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities. As one governor stated, 'we are now tenacious in our challenge of the leadership'. An external review of governance has not taken place due to the plans for federation.

The local authority has supported and challenged the school effectively. Its officers have brokered a wide range of support from local schools. They have worked quickly to support governors to find solutions to strengthen the leadership and management of the school. The local authority has also supported the school towards its planned federation with Atherton St George's CofE Primary School.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement 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 and the Interim Director of Children's Services for Wigan. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Martin Bell

**Her Majesty's Inspector**