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5 July 2007

Mrs H Hutchison  
The Headteacher  
St Paul's Church of England Primary School  
New Street  
Gloucester  
GL1 5BD

Dear Mrs Hutchison

Special Measures: Monitoring Inspection of St Paul's Church of England Primary School

### Introduction

Following my visit to your school with Gail Robertson, Additional Inspector, on 26 and 27 June 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 2006.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work. They visited all classrooms, scrutinised documents, looked at a range of pupils' work, and held discussions with the headteacher, groups of pupils, two governors including the chair, various members of staff, and two senior officers from the local authority (LA).

### Context

The substantial changes to the teaching staff team noted at the time of the first monitoring visit are ongoing. Three teachers seconded from local schools will leave at the end of this academic year. The governors have appointed two permanent teachers who will take up their posts in September 2007.

## Achievement and standards

There have been significant improvements in pupils' standards in Year 2 but in Year 6 they remain inadequate. Previous inadequate progress, related to some weak teaching in earlier years, means that too many older pupils are still underachieving in spite of clear improvements.

Children settle well in Reception and make satisfactory progress. By the end of the year most are working close to national expectations, although standards remain well below this level for a considerable minority. Pupils in Year 2 have responded well to the good teaching and are making good progress. Results from the very recent Key Stage 1 teacher assessments show standards are close to national expectations, being stronger in reading and mathematics than in writing. Standards in English, mathematics and science remain significantly below average in Year 6. Targets set for 2008 for pupils currently in Year 5 are higher than this year's targets, reflecting the school's higher expectations and also the recent improved rate of progress by these pupils.

The rate of progress made by pupils remains inconsistent and variable from one class to another. Recent changes in teaching are beginning to promote improvements in pupils' progress, but too many pupils of all abilities made insufficient progress or even went backwards during the first part of this school year. The recently established procedures for tracking pupils' performance are being used to identify the needs of specific pupils and to decide how and where to target additional support. A series of assessments scheduled for later this term is expected to provide evidence of how successful these interventions have been. Pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress in their acquisition of English language skills.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2006:

- ensure that work consistently meets the needs of all pupils, in order to raise achievement in English, mathematics and science, particularly in Years 3 to 6 – satisfactory.

## Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being remain satisfactory. The majority of pupils are happy and enjoy their time in school. Attendance has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The school works closely with external agencies to combat the persistent absences of a few pupils. It very effectively encourages all pupils to attend regularly and punctually. Pupils look forward to the celebration assembly on Friday to hear which class is awarded the good attendance trophy. Their behaviour and attitudes are good in almost all lessons and outside on the playground. Relationships are positive, reflecting pupils' good social development. The pupils report no bullying or harassment and they know what to do should it occur. The pupils are keen to undertake classroom tasks and take on

school roles such as school councillors, peer mediators and play leaders at break times. They feel safe in school and report that the adults take care of them. One said, 'Teachers are kind and caring.' Pupils know about healthy eating and how exercise keeps their bodies fit. They look forward to 'wake and shake' sessions in the morning and appreciate the importance of physical fitness.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2006:

- develop attendance procedures so that all parents and carers become more aware of the importance of attending school regularly – good.

### Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning remains inadequate although it is continuing to improve steadily. There has been a further increase in the proportion of good teaching, but this is not distributed evenly across year groups. Too many lessons are still inadequate.

The school and the LA have provided good training and support for all staff and most have responded well to this. The planning of lessons has improved. A strength in most classes is the way teachers find imaginative ways of linking subjects to make activities seem relevant and to motivate the pupils. A very good example of this was seen when the 'air-raid siren' went off unexpectedly during some work reflecting on feelings and emotions about the Second World War in Year 6. Pupils took cover until the 'all-clear' signal was heard. There is a clearer focus for most lessons and learning objectives are shared with pupils from the outset.

Staff are beginning to address the different learning needs of the pupils, but expectations of what can be achieved are still not high enough across the school. The match of work to the needs of different pupils remains inconsistent because not all teachers are making best use of the increasing range of information available to them about the progress of individual pupils. Consequently, some work set is too easy and some is too challenging. This slows pupils' rate of learning. Another factor that slows learning is that pupils spend too long on identical tasks at the beginning and end of otherwise satisfactory lessons. In almost all lessons teachers use positive approaches to manage behaviour, for example using praise very effectively. Teaching assistants are well deployed to support pupils and they have a good impact on learning, especially for pupils with learning difficulties. They are rarely deployed to challenge and extend more able pupils.

Pupils are set targets related to their work, for example 'I can punctuate speech correctly in my writing', but these targets are not referred to enough in lessons and pupils do not consistently apply them to their work. Teachers' marking has improved but remains inconsistent from class to class in how effectively it supports pupils' understanding of how to improve their work. Older pupils are being given more responsibility for setting out their own work than at the time of the last inspection, with less time given to completing published worksheets.

Those pupils who speak English as an additional language receive satisfactory support. The LA is providing support for teachers in helping to adapt the curriculum and their teaching styles to meet the needs of this small group of pupils and is working directly with some pupils. However, there is a lack of clarity about the overall direction and coordination of this programme.

The curriculum remains satisfactory but includes an increasing range of good and imaginative links between subjects, practical experiences and activities in all year groups, including visits and work outdoors. These are contributing to the pupils' increased enjoyment of school. Examples include work related to the Katie Morag stories in Year 2, studies of the Amazon rainforest in Year 4 and the work on the Second World War in Year 6. These approaches to the curriculum are making lessons fun and meaningful.

Pupils feel well cared for and are confident that adults listen to them if they need help. Guidance and support for learning are improving. Assessment information is being used to identify those pupils who need extra support and to set all pupils relevant targets. However, some pupils are not clear about their individual targets and what they need to do to improve. Insufficient reference is made to these targets in lessons or when teachers mark pupils' books. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is satisfactory. Staff now have higher expectations of these pupils following recent training.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2006:

- improve the quality of teaching, in all year groups, apart from Year 2, so that all lessons are good and underachievement is eliminated – satisfactory.

### Leadership and management

The headteacher is providing good leadership and is a very strong role model for colleagues and pupils. She has maintained a clear focus on the need to raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching and has successfully established a greater sense of accountability amongst staff for their roles in this. She is supported well by the deputy headteacher, who has taken a lead in developing comprehensive systems to track pupils' progress.

The membership and role of the senior management team continue to evolve, with one member stepping down and one other being appointed to the team. The headteacher has used external support to help clarify and strengthen the expectations of subject leaders. This has been carried out very effectively. Following a period of over-reliance on the headteacher, most of these leaders are responding well to the professional support received and are welcoming the opportunity to take on greater responsibilities in their particular areas, such as checking pupils' work. Despite the effective guidance and support, a few leaders lack experience and confidence in their roles and would welcome additional training.

There are rigorous and effective procedures to check the performance of the school, particularly the quality of teaching and learning and the quality of pupils' work in their books. Many of these are led by the headteacher. They result in accurate judgements about the school's performance. Evidence from these checks is used very well by the headteacher and leadership team in drawing up action plans. There are systematic checks to see these plans are followed through as intended and they are adjusted as necessary to reflect changing circumstances.

Governance continues to improve satisfactorily. Governors have responded well to the guidance from the headteacher and LA. They are now more involved in the school through a schedule of visits and meetings. Their own procedures have been tightened up and they are beginning to take the initiative in holding the school to account, for example by holding meetings with individual subject leaders to consider developments in their subject across the school.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2006:

- develop the expertise of the senior managers, the subject coordinators and governors to enable them to monitor the work of the school rigorously and deal more effectively with weaknesses – good.

#### External support

The local authority is responding well and flexibly to the evolving needs of the school whilst being keen to help the school leaders assume full responsibility for the school. It has implemented its support plan for the first year. It has pulled back from conducting its own review of progress until after the summer holiday, but a number of officers are working effectively alongside school staff and other officers have led very constructive training days, for example on meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties. These have been received very positively by the staff and have resulted in improved awareness and quality of provision, for example in the way individual plans are constructed for specific pupils with learning difficulties.

#### Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

At this stage newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure the improvements in teaching are further developed and more consistently distributed across all year groups.

- Enable senior staff and subject leaders to receive further support and training in order to raise their confidence and equip them to fulfil their increased roles.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Gloucestershire.

Yours sincerely

Martin Kerly  
Additional Inspector