

16 May 2007

Mrs Sandra Furno  
Headteacher  
Christ Church CE Primary School  
Shieldfield Green  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
Tyne and Wear  
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Dear Mrs Furno

#### Ofsted Monitoring of Schools with Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 15 May 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to the chair of governors and to the children, who were very helpful and excellent representatives of the school.

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.

As a result of the inspection in September 2006, the school was asked to:

- raise expectations of pupils' work in order to improve achievement in all subjects;
- improve the curriculum to give the pupils responsibility for their own learning;
- ensure that the school's development is based on a clear analysis of any weaknesses and that action plans are detailed and rigorously carried out.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made inadequate progress in addressing the points for improvement. Although the school, supported by the local authority, has put in place a number of necessary and appropriate developments, most are at too early a stage to show clear evidence of their impact. In particular, pupils' progress remains inadequate.

On taking up post in January 2007, the new headteacher reviewed and improved a number of key mechanisms for school improvement, such as the action plan, and systems for tracking pupils' progress. The action plan is clear and detailed, and well focused on the areas for improvement, with specific timescales and responsibilities. The headteacher is very committed to the improvement process and has a good

understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Her strategic vision is good. She has focused particularly on developing the staff's skills in teaching and support, through a wide range of professional training and monitoring. This has involved expertise from within and outside the school, and has been well matched to the needs of the staff and the school.

This had had some good effects, particularly in planning, which shows a greater level of challenge for specific groups of pupils, and the development of pupils' targets. Curricular targets are shared with the pupils and are clearly displayed. The pupils are very positive about these and can explain what their purpose is, how they are used, and how helpful they are in supporting their learning. There are also good arrangements for groups of pupils to work at a level above that normally expected for their age, to provide additional challenge where necessary.

There have been some improvements in the assessment of pupils' work, with some good examples of marking which clearly states what pupils have achieved and what they need to do next to improve. Some books demonstrate high expectations, with work returned to do again if the teacher feels it is less good than the pupil is capable of. However, there are still too many examples of purely descriptive marking, or marking which rightly asks questions of pupils, but is not followed up.

The headteacher and other colleagues have undertaken a programme of monitoring which is well matched to the action plan. However, there is still too little focus on the effect teaching has on pupils' learning and the progress they make. Lesson observations this year have focused on the implementation of new skills and approaches, rather than the impact of this on how well pupils make progress.

Scrutiny of the data tracking pupils' progress and other information shows that, notwithstanding, these and other developments, pupils continue to make inadequate progress overall. This is partly because the specific interventions to accelerate progress began only in January, and therefore have not had sufficient time to show their full effect. It is also partly because the system for target-setting and monitoring, though improved, has a number of weaknesses which make it difficult to track pupils' progress sufficiently accurately or promptly. Hence a considerable number of pupils who are underachieving are not being picked up early enough, and the school is not analysing the reasons for their lack of progress systematically.

In addition, the school does not make sufficient provision for the assessment and specialist teaching of pupils who have English as an additional language. These pupils form an increasing proportion of the school's population, and their progress is inhibited by lack of a school wide approach to teaching and support in class and by relevant specialist support where necessary. While these pupils generally make some progress, and hence do not give cause for concern in the school's existing tracking system, they do not make the progress they are capable of. Similarly, the school has a high number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A number of these pupils, particularly those who are on 'school action', are not

making sufficient progress, although many pupils on 'school action plus' are now making satisfactory or better progress.

Pupils' progress is variable across the school. Satisfactory or sometimes good progress in some year groups is let down by inadequate or minimal progress in others.

The school has been provided with an adequate level of support overall by the local authority and by the school improvement partner, although the focus has not been specific enough. The local authority has worked effectively to arrange and co-ordinate support from a variety of professionals, and has co-operated with the school improvement partner to monitor progress. However, since the school received a Notice to Improve, neither the local authority, the governing body, nor the school has focused sufficiently on the pace of change, or reviewed development rigorously against its outcomes for pupils. As a result, despite the considerable amount of positive work put in by the school and other partners, it has not at this stage made adequate progress. It is moving in the right direction, but it has not moved quickly enough. The pace of change has increased recently and is now good, but there is still a need for greater focus on ensuring that development work is having a direct impact on pupils' progress. The governing body is beginning to hold the school more to account. The chair of governors is supportive, committed to the improvement process and has a good understanding of the areas for development.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

Andrea Lyons  
Her Majesty's Inspector