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19 March 2008

Mr I Walker  
The Headteacher  
St Mark's C of E Primary School  
High Street  
Pensnett  
Brierley Hill  
West Midlands  
DY5 4DZ

Dear Walker

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ST MARK'S C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit Peter Kemble, Additional Inspector, to your school on 12 and 13 March 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 2006. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report 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.

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

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Wordsworth  
H M Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF ST MARK'S C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the third monitoring inspection: 12 and 13 March 2008

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority (LA).

### Context

The school context has not significantly changed since the previous monitoring visit. An advanced skills teacher has been appointed. Two teachers are due to leave the school at the end of the spring term.

### Achievement and standards

The school's assessment information for the end of the spring term 2008 shows that in each year group an increasing proportion of pupils made satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards overall remain low but are improving. Children in the Foundation Stage are beginning to work at levels broadly in line with those for their age. Standards in the current Year 2 show an improving picture, with approximately half the pupils on track to attain the expected level in reading and writing, and 80% in mathematics. A scrutiny of the pupils' books shows that progress in science is broadly satisfactory in Years 1 and 2.

Just over a third of the pupils in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 are currently working at the level expected for their age in English and mathematics. A much weaker picture is evident in science and information and communication technology (ICT), where standards are extremely low. Pupils' achievement is broadly satisfactory in English and mathematics, but inadequate in science and ICT.

### Personal development and well-being

Pupils are polite and welcoming and most are able to talk confidently about their work. Opportunities for them to become independent learners have increased. The pupils generally behave well in lessons; the school is calm and settled. Although, there have been three fixed term exclusions since the previous monitoring visit, these pupils have successfully returned to school and have benefited from the well conceived support systems in place. Attendance continues to improve.

### Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has strengthened. Nevertheless, it remains stronger in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2. There is less inadequate teaching and more that is

satisfactory or better than at the time of the last visit, with a small proportion of good teaching seen. In the main, lessons are purposeful and organised. All teachers have benefited from intensive training and support to improve the quality of teaching. There has been a noticeable improvement in the type and range of activities offered to the pupils. Discussions in small groups and with a partner are now a routine part of most lessons. Basic skills are now taught systematically, particularly in reading and writing.

Improved staff subject knowledge, the effective use of assessment information, and consistent systems of planning are now serving to raise attainment, particularly in mathematics and English.

Pupils receive regular feedback and have a good knowledge of how to improve their work. Teachers assess pupils' success against the learning intention effectively. However, this is not the case in science and ICT. The school is aware of the issues in the teaching of these subjects. Work is insufficiently matched to pupils' learning needs because progress is not tracked well enough in order for teachers to plan effectively for the different range of abilities in each class. The school has suitable plans in place to address this.

The quality of provision for the pupils who have special educational needs continues to improve and is satisfactory. Teachers are clearer about supporting pupils through appropriate individual and group education plans. They make effective use of teaching assistants and intervention programmes for the small number of pupils with genuine learning difficulties.

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

- raise standards and improve achievement in English, mathematics, science and ICT by ensuring that the curriculum is better matched to the pupils' stages of development – satisfactory
- improve the quality of teaching and learning so that teachers have high expectations of all pupils, particularly high attainers, and ensure that assessment information is used rigorously to move pupils on in their learning – satisfactory
- ensure that pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities have clear targets identified in their individual education plans so that their needs are consistently met in lessons – satisfactory.

### Leadership and management

The senior leadership team is using assessment data well to check on the pupils' progress and monitor its own success in securing improvement. Teachers have been receptive to a range of recently introduced strategies designed to bring about necessary improvements in mathematics and science. Decisive action is beginning to increase pupils' rates of progress, but many strategies need more time to embed fully. Effective professional development has led directly to the improvement in the quality of teaching across the school, particularly in mathematics, and has successfully maintained the improvements in the teaching of English.

Subject leaders have an increased understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their area of responsibility. Nevertheless, staff and governors know there is more to do in monitoring and evaluating the school's provision, especially in fully engaging subject leaders in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. Further development is required to ensure that everyone has the necessary skills to help accelerate the pupils' rate of learning, particularly in science and ICT. Reports to the governors' leadership committee are detailed and based on measurable outcomes, and this is helping to maintain the school's focus on raising standards.

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

- implement rigorous systems to ensure that staff are held accountable for the standards that pupils attain and are very clear as to what they need to do in order to raise those standards and improve achievement – good.

#### External support

The local authority has provided good support. Communication between itself and the school has been well managed. Consultants have continued to work effectively with individual teachers and monitoring has been carried out in line with the statement of action. The Task Group has responded swiftly to any emerging concerns.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Provide further opportunities for subject leaders to monitor and evaluate the quality of pupils' learning throughout the school.
- Eliminate inadequate teaching and increase the proportion of good teaching to improve further the rate of pupils' progress particularly in science and ICT.