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Mrs Yvonne Hunter
The Advisory Headteacher
Holy Trinity Church of England Primary School, Dartford
Chatsworth Road
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Dear Mrs Hunter

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 20 May 2008, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the staff, pupils, governor and the School Improvement Partner for the help they gave me during my visit. Following the most recent inspection which resulted in a Notice to Improve, the substantive headteacher resigned and was replaced by an experienced acting headteacher until the end of December 2007. In January 2008 the current local authority (LA) advisory headteacher took up her post. In addition, an experienced deputy headteacher from another Kent school has been seconded to Holy Trinity for three days a week in order to strengthen further leadership and management. The governors and local authority are actively exploring a range of future options for the school and the advisory headteacher is expected to remain in post until substantive leadership arrangements are in place.

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 on 26 and 27 September 2007, the school was asked to

- raise standards in science
- strengthen teaching and learning; in particular encourage all pupils to participate and engage in discussion, improve the impact that teaching assistants have on pupils' learning, and address the weaknesses in behaviour management
- take steps to encourage boys and girls and pupils from different backgrounds to work and play together
- improve the leadership and strategic direction of the school to ensure it has the capacity to sustain improvement.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the identified areas for improvement.

The school's tracking data and assessments indicate that standards in science have risen sharply so that they are now closer to those found nationally. Following a dip in 2007, standards overall are rising.

Teaching and learning are improving quickly. Most teachers use learning objectives well and where these are most effective they are discussed with the class so that pupils know exactly what they are expected to learn and how their progress will be assessed. While most teachers share their success criteria with pupils not all explain them as fully as they might, so that in some classes pupils are less sure about how well they are doing. Because there is a greater emphasis on practical work, pupils throughout the school are now more enthusiastic learners. Group and paired discussions are used well to encourage and engage pupils and develop those skills necessary to work as part of a team. The use of teaching assistants to support learning has also improved. This is particularly true of the support provided for individual pupils and when assistants are working with small groups. However, teaching assistants are not always as well used during whole class teaching and the beginning and end of lessons when their role was sometimes too passive. Behaviour is improving because pupils are now more enthusiastically engaged in learning and the 'Code of Conduct' is well understood and consistently applied. Pupils work and play together well.

The current leadership team has a clear focus on raising standards through improving further the quality of teaching and learning. This drive has involved new ways of working, greater contact with other schools and participation in a range of local and national initiatives intended to raise standards. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been very effective in planning for sustainable school improvement. With the support of the LA, they are successfully developing the leadership roles of all staff including subject and team leaders. Teachers are now actively involved in monitoring the impact of their work so that they feel more accountable for the progress pupils make and how well the school is doing. Governors are taking a more active part in monitoring the work of the school and are developing a range of links to identified areas for improvement and key areas of the curriculum.

The LA has provided good, well planned support. This has included strengthening the senior leadership team and the provision of advanced skills teachers, curriculum consultants and other members of the Kent Advisory Service. This support is well coordinated by the school and School Improvement Partner. The school has valued this high level of support but is also keenly aware of the need to develop systems which will allow it to develop and sustain its own capacity to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Robert Lovett
Her Majesty's Inspector