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Miss Gill Murch  
The Headteacher  
St Catherine's Church of England Primary and Nursery School  
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Dear Miss Murch

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 January 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to staff and pupils who gave their time to talk to me.

Since the time of the last inspection, a new mathematics coordinator has been appointed from within the existing staff. Two part time teachers have left the school and a temporary teacher has been appointed for the Year 3/4 class. The Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator is currently on maternity leave and the Reception teacher has been unwell since Christmas.

As a result of the inspection on 15 and 16 May 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards and achievement in all subjects, especially mathematics
- improve arrangements to assess pupils, and make better use of assessment information to raise their standards
- improve the quality of guidance to pupils through better target setting and marking so that they understand the next steps in their learning
- improve the quality of leadership and management in mathematics.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Although the school has made satisfactory progress in tackling the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection, many of the actions you and your team have introduced are interlinked and are at an early stage of development. For example, systems for collecting and analysing data were not available to staff in the



school at the time of the last inspection, so staff were unfamiliar with using assessment information for their planning. Without adequate data it was not possible for them to monitor or judge pupils' progress accurately. It has taken time, not only to introduce robust procedures, but also to develop staff skills, to use them.

The proportion of pupils working below age related targets has reduced over the last term, particularly in mathematics and English. Pupils are now making satisfactory progress, although the high mobility of pupils makes judging the school's overall progress difficult. Overall, standards are still inadequate although they are better than at the time of the last inspection, particularly in mathematics.

Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress in setting up a reliable system of regular assessment which is understood by all staff. It is currently only used for mathematics and English. Science data are currently only available for Year 6. A staff meeting has been set aside to discuss introducing regular assessment into science across the school this term. The use of this assessment data to inform teachers' planning is at an early stage of development and is reflected in the variable quality of teaching across the school.

Of the four lessons observed during the inspection three were satisfactory and one was good. Staff absence and the use of supply staff prevented observation in one Key Stage 2 class. The Early Years Foundation Stage was not observed on this visit, although parents expressed concern about the continued absence of the Reception teacher, who has not been in school since the beginning of term. Improvements since the last inspection in the quality of teachers' planning and the pace of lessons were evident in the lessons seen. New timetable arrangements now give teachers time to work together in pairs and they report that this has allowed them to share ideas and increase their confidence.

Satisfactory progress has been made in providing helpful guidance for pupils. Targets are now set to tackle areas of weakness in pupils' learning. These are identified through analysis of optional national test papers, and based on the end of year objectives for each year group. Staff are working on these with pupils for a minimum of two mental or oral sessions each week. The scope of these targets is currently limited, but the leadership emphasis has been on ensuring that staff, unfamiliar with such a process, learn to use them effectively before a more complex system is introduced. Pupils know and understand the targets they have been set. A new marking policy, developed with the staff, is at an early stage of implementation. Scrutiny of work during the inspection found inconsistent practice, and pupils reported that they were unlikely to read or respond to the comments that are made in exercise books.

A new subject leader for mathematics has been appointed and she has made good progress in developing the assessment system and encouraging staff to use it to inform their planning. As a non mathematics specialist, her knowledge has been extended through relevant training. With the mathematics consultant, she has made a good start in helping to develop teachers' skills and subject knowledge in order to

improve pupils' attainment. Teachers report that their confidence is increasing and her monitoring of the quality of teaching in mathematics shows that this is the case. Coaching has been provided for each individual teacher as well as specific key stage training. Measurable improvements have been particularly evident at pupil progress meetings. She has also made a start in providing useful information about current methods of mathematics teaching to parents.

The support provided by the local authority has been good. The headteacher, the mathematics coordinator and individual teachers have all found the support of the consultants who have worked with the school very helpful and encouraging. The primary adviser has made regular visits and has had a considerable impact on the progress so far made by the school.

The local authority statement of action has been amended as requested by Ofsted. It now adequately reflects the need for all staff to have the opportunity to develop their mathematics skills and knowledge further.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mary Massey  
Her Majesty's Inspector