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Mr Philip Mantell
Headteacher
St Marychurch Church of England Primary and Nursery School
Hartop Road
Torquay
Devon
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Dear Mr Mantell,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 4 March 2010, 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 your staff and pupils for their professional and enthusiastic participation in the visit. The attendance of your vice chair of governors and local authority representative at the feedback session was also appreciated.

I noted that since the last inspection there have been some important contextual changes at the school. Notably, these include your appointment as a new Headteacher and declining numbers of pupils on the school roll. In addition, four members of staff have left the school. Two temporary appointments have been made, reducing the total by two members of staff.

As a result of the inspection on 4 March 2008, the school was asked to:

- improve standards in English, mathematics and science
- ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching
- enable higher-attaining pupils to make the progress of which they are capable
- provide more opportunities for pupils to practise the skills acquired in literacy and numeracy.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made good progress in making improvements, and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The standards that pupils attain in national tests have risen from a position of below national averages in English, mathematics and science in 2007 and 2008 to being



above in 2009 in English and science, and significantly above in mathematics. A number of key factors account for this improvement, including improved tracking of pupil progress through comprehensive data, targeted intervention for individual pupils and groups, and precise monitoring of classroom practice. However, above all, renewed emphasis on creating more effective conditions for learning and an expectation that all pupils will achieve have resulted in rising standards and pupils making good progress throughout the school.

Greater consistency in the quality of teaching and its impact on learning continues to be a high priority for the school and some success has been achieved in this respect. The quality of lesson planning, more precise learning objectives, the structure of learning activities and the careful deployment of all adults to support learning have all improved. This has resulted in motivated and enthusiastic pupils who concentrate well and apply themselves to their work and thus they make good progress in acquiring knowledge, skills and understanding in individual lessons and over time in English, mathematics and science. There is scope for further improving the quality and consistency of the marking of pupils' work and relating it more directly to their individual targets and attainment level. The quality of teaching is not yet, therefore, consistently good across all year groups and key stages.

Also evident in lesson planning is the consistency with which teachers ensure there are planned opportunities for developing or applying precise vocabulary relevant to the subject, for example in science and maths lessons. This is helping pupils to apply their skills in literacy in other subjects. Equally, good attention is paid to encouraging speaking and listening skills through opportunities for paired or group discussions in lessons. This aspect has not yet extended as well in practising numeracy skills, and lesson observations revealed some missed opportunities in this respect.

The school has made good progress in securing greater proportions of pupils attaining higher levels in National Curriculum tests, particularly in Key Stage 2. The older pupils were appreciative of the increased attention to personalise their learning and match it more closely to their abilities. This was also evident in lesson planning. In particular, the pupils reported that they enjoy the investigative and problem-solving work, participation in enrichment and extension activities with other schools and the opportunities to be independent and take responsibility for their own learning.

There is a close partnership between the local authority and the school, where advisory and consultancy support has been beneficial in supporting the progress made since the appointment of the new headteacher. Participation in local systems for data tracking and self-evaluation are secure, and national initiatives such as 'Every Child a Writer' have made a good contribution to securing better pupil progress.

The school has good capacity for further improvement because senior leaders, middle managers and governors have an accurate picture of the school's strengths

and areas for improvement as a result of honest and robust systems for self-evaluation. In turn, this is influencing appropriate priorities for school improvement planning and there is a strong commitment from all concerned to securing continuous improvement as reflected in improved standards.

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,

Kevin Jane
Her Majesty's Inspector