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11 February 2010

Mrs Diana Mason  
Headteacher  
St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided School  
Coombe Avenue  
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Dear Mrs Mason

### Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 4 February 2010. I appreciate the time you gave to our discussions and for the information which you provided during my visit. I am also grateful to the chair of the governing body and to your school improvement partner for taking time to speak to me. Finally, please pass on my thanks to the staff and pupils who discussed their work with me.

Since the last inspection, the school has appointed a new deputy headteacher; completed its reorganisation from two-form entry to one-form entry; taken responsibility for management of the on-site nursery and developed the outdoor learning area for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

As a result of the inspection on 16–17 April 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise expectations by setting targets that are more demanding for all pupils
- ensure that pupils of all abilities know how well they are doing and what they need to do to reach their targets, and that teaching is good enough to help them achieve them
- provide more class activities that captivate, stimulate and challenge pupils and improve the school's outdoor facilities for pupils to work and play.

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

Pupils' attainment has improved since the last inspection. Results in national tests at the end of Year 6 show pupils now reach standards which are in line with national



expectations. Improvement has been most marked in mathematics and science. Relatively few pupils gain the highest levels in English, and the school has introduced a range of strategies to raise attainment in this subject across the school. Although there is variation in the rate of progress between classes, pupils now make much better progress overall between Year 3 and Year 6. Improvement in the rate of progress by the end of Year 2 has been slower, and attainment remains below the national average, particularly in reading and writing, which presents a similar picture to that at the time of the last inspection. However, strategies introduced to raise standards are beginning to quicken the rate of progress. Such initiatives as the 'Storymaking' project, an 'Everybody Writes' day for the whole school and 'Every Child a Writer' have been successful in raising the profile of literacy across the school. Parents have also come into school to take part and understand how they can help their children.

Progress and learning in lessons has improved due to the higher expectations of teachers. Teachers plan lessons that are more stimulating, include a wider range of resources and provide increased opportunities for pupils to learn through practical activities. Teachers assess pupils work regularly and use the information to set more challenging targets. Pupils of all abilities know their targets and marking generally helps them to understand how they can improve their work. However, some inconsistency remains between classes in the use of assessment information and marking.

Pupils' enjoyment of school has been improved through the provision of better playground facilities and opportunities to learn in the outdoor environment. For example, plants are grown in a vegetable plot which are similar to those grown in Kenya, supporting an understanding of a country with which the school has established a link; a pond has been built and is used to extend the science curriculum; and the playgrounds have been redesigned to offer a wider choice of games for pupils to play. The Early Years Foundation Stage was judged good at the last inspection. Provision has been improved further through the extension of facilities for children to learn outside.

The school has introduced a good system for checking pupils' progress and for identifying those who are falling behind. A plan for each pupil with special educational needs and/or disabilities has been drawn up, showing a broad range of provision which includes individual support and the opportunity to work in small groups. The school is beginning to evaluate the impact of these interventions. Teachers complete an assessment of pupils' progress each half term and have improved the accuracy of their judgements through more rigorous moderation. As a result, expectations are higher and based on more reliable information.

The leadership and management have been strengthened since the time of the last inspection. Several changes in class teacher and subject responsibility have occurred following the school's reorganisation. Subject leaders have extended their roles and they have realistic plans for developing their subjects across the school. The



headteacher and governing body have taken the school successfully through a period of reorganisation while maintaining a clear focus on raising standards and on improving the school's overall performance. The strengthened senior leadership and staff team have worked hard to implement many positive changes since the last inspection. These changes have had a significant impact on raising pupils' attainment in classes between Year 3 and Year 6, although in Years 1 and 2 they have not had time to demonstrate their full impact. Taken together, these improvements demonstrate satisfactorily that the school has a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The school has benefited from good external support. The school improvement partner has worked closely with the school and has provided insightful reports on its performance with helpful suggestions for improvement. The local authority has provided a good range of support, particularly to improve the school's performance in numeracy and literacy. Training and guidance has been given to subject coordinators and to class teachers.

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

Andrew Redpath  
Her Majesty's Inspector

