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Mr Paul Gabbett
St Margaret's Church of England VC School
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Dear Gabbett,

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 3 February 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Could you also thank the Chair of Governors and the pupils for their help and support.

As a result of the inspection on 29 September 2009, the school was asked to:

- Ensure that systems for safeguarding pupils are rigorous enough to fulfil the statutory requirements for the checking of staff.
- Move the quality of teaching from satisfactory to good by:
 - ensuring that teachers make better use of information about how well pupils are doing so work is consistently pitched at the right level for all
 - increasing the pace of learning in lessons so that less time is lost.
- Strengthen leadership and management at all levels by:
 - ensuring that leaders have higher expectations of progress from year to year for all groups of pupils
 - sharpening the analysis and use of data to give leaders a clearer picture of patterns, trends and areas of strength and weakness
 - systematically monitoring initiatives to check that they are having the desired effect and are leading to sustained improvement in provision across the school.

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



The governing body and senior leaders have moved quickly to ensure that effective systems for safeguarding the welfare of pupils are now in place. Pupils are firmly of the opinion that they feel safe and know who to turn to if they have problems at school.

In 2009, most pupils did not make the progress expected of them. Pupils did not attain the higher levels at Key Stage 2 in English and, to a lesser extent, in science. Pupils' attainment in mathematics was broadly average. The school contested the validity of the results and succeeded in obtaining a re-mark of pupils' English SATS papers. This improved a small minority of pupils' results but many grades remained unchanged. The school's data for 2010 show that many pupils are making slow progress in their learning against targets that are not challenging, and leaders have been slow to address this underachievement.

Lessons that were observed during the inspection identified that the majority of pupils in these lessons made at least satisfactory progress in their learning. However, one lesson observed was unsatisfactory. Over half the lessons observed were good. Pupils enjoy their learning and have good opportunities to undertake self-assessment. Pupils were of the opinion that teachers care about their progress.

In the best lessons observed, teachers used effective questioning techniques that moved pupils on well in their learning. In these lessons the pace of learning was fast and opportunities to extend pupils' learning were effective. In the weaker lessons, the pace of progress was slow. Questions used by teachers did not allow pupils to identify what they had learnt. Teachers' use of assessment in some lessons is underdeveloped, and as a result they do not have a good understanding of how well pupils are learning. Consequently, work set is not challenging enough, particularly for more able pupils. Marking is of a variable quality across the school and within year groups, and does not always make clear to pupils what they need to do to improve. While some exemplary marking was observed, this is not common.

Leaders and managers have focused well on improving the quality of teaching. The school's self-evaluation identifies key priorities correctly. Monitoring of action plans to improve teaching practice has enabled leaders to gain a sound understanding of how well teachers are raising achievement in lessons. It has also enabled the school to highlight good practice and assess parts of lessons to see how 'openings, middles and endings' of lessons can be improved and whether school priorities are being implemented effectively in lessons. However, the full impact of this work is yet to be realised. The school has put in place extensive individual support to enable pupils to achieve better.

Teaching staff are now using data to assess how well pupils are achieving their targets. However, targets are not challenging for all students. Middle leaders are not using data sharply enough to identify underachievement, which in turn has led to leaders being slow to address significant pupil underachievement in some core



subjects and across year groups. Senior leaders are not analysing the patterns and trends of pupils' achievement closely enough in order to gain a clear understanding of performance throughout the school.

The creation of new sub-committees of the governing body, whose main purpose is to scrutinise the progress of key areas of the school's performance, is having a positive impact on the monitoring of school's work. However, it is too early to assess the full impact of these new sub-committees. Governors are undertaking training to enable them to critically appraise the performance of the school more effectively. The chair of the governing body is well aware of the school's key priorities.

The local authority's statement of action has accurately identified what is required for the school to improve. Local authority support has contributed well to raising the standard of teaching in the school.

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

Samantha Morgan-Price

Her Majesty's Inspector