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23 September 2010

Mr Darren Mussell  
Headteacher  
Great Harwood St John's Church of England Primary School  
St John's Street  
Great Harwood  
Blackburn  
Lancashire  
BB6 7ES

Dear Mr Mussell

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Great Harwood St John's  
Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 21 and 22 September 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2009. The most important areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly Qualified Teachers may not be appointed

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Diocese of Blackburn and the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire.

Yours sincerely

John Coleman  
Her Majesty's Inspector

## Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2009

- Increase the proportion of good teaching to ensure that pupils make good progress and attainment improves by:
  - ensuring that lessons are planned to include a range of activities that relate to the needs of all pupils
  - sharing the best practice in teaching more systematically.
- Establish a rigorous system for monitoring and evaluating provision and outcomes.
- Develop the role of the governing body in evaluation and in challenging the school to improve through additional training.
- Raise attendance by working with low-attending pupils and their families.

Special measures: monitoring of Great Harwood St John's Church of England Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 21 and 22 September 2010

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, school staff, pupils and a representative of the local authority. Discussions were held by telephone with the chair and vice-chair of governors.

## Context

Since the last monitoring inspection the school has reduced the number of classes from six to five with effect from the start of the new academic year. Two temporary teachers have left the school and a new teacher has been appointed to a permanent post beginning 1 September 2010. Each class is now taught by a full-time permanent teacher. The local authority continues to support the school at a similar level to that which was seen at the last monitoring inspection. The governing body has appointed two new governors and has retained the services of the outgoing parent governor in an associate capacity.

## Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Inspection evidence, provisional national test results and the outcomes of the school's monitoring all show that pupils are making improved progress and standards are rising slightly. There are significant variations, such as in the provisional 2010, Year 6 national test results for English and mathematics. The percentage of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 in mathematics is similar to that seen in the previous year but the percentage in English is lower. The results for pupils attaining the higher Level 5 have improved in English and are significantly better in mathematics. Standards by these measures indicate that mathematics attainment has improved and is broadly in line with national averages but English attainment remains below average.

In lessons seen during this monitoring inspection, the standards attained by pupils are higher than previously observed and the data tracking by the school confirms this improvement. Of significant note are the progress measures demonstrated by the school's tracking system which charts pupils' attainment at the end of each half term. The progress made by most pupils in the summer term of 2010 sustained the improvement seen at the last monitoring inspection, though this is not consistent across all classes or between subjects. Pupils in Year 6 in 2010 made more overall progress from their Key Stage 1 starting points than pupils in previous cohorts in 2007/2009.

## Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' attendance rates have continued to rise since the last monitoring inspection. The school's leaders have successfully implemented a wide range of incentives which are much appreciated by the pupils. This has been combined with decisive sanctions, including the process of legal prosecution, to encourage parents to ensure their child attends fully. As a result, the percentage of pupils attending school in the summer term rose sharply and the overall figure for the whole-school year is much improved on 2009. The number of pupils who are persistent absentees has also been substantially reduced.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise attendance by working with low-attending pupils and their families – good

## The effectiveness of provision

Since the last monitoring inspection the quality of teaching has improved. In the lessons seen during this visit the proportion of good lessons was significantly better. The school's own monitoring, undertaken with the support of the local authority, shows an improving profile of lessons during the summer term but especially at the start of this term. Changes in staff and the benefits of targeted training for teachers is having a strong impact on the quality of lesson plans, the pace of teaching and the use of resources. Concerns were raised at the time of the last visit about the proportion of time teachers spent talking to pupils and giving instructions to them. This weakness has been successfully tackled and a strong feature of the lessons seen during this visit was the good balance of time given by all teachers to a range of different activities. The result of this is that pupils show much improved interest in the lesson and concentrate for much longer. These improvements have been brought about steadily during the last term and it is only recently that the full impact is being seen consistently in all classes.

Characteristic of lessons seen during this visit are the very good relationships between pupils and with staff. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and they behave well so that teachers do not have to spend time correcting misbehaviour. Many improvements have been made to the classroom environments with new furniture and decoration. Pupils say they are really pleased about this and one pupil told the inspector, 'It is great to sit on a chair which is the right height for me'. The general improvements to the appearance of the inside of the school are more motivating for pupils and are helping to inspire their interest in learning.

Pupils who spoke to the inspector were mostly praising of the improvements in the school. They recognised the better activities in lessons and commented that they are

more enjoyable. However, many pupils think that what is expected of them in lessons is either 'too easy or about right', there is a strong view that lessons are not 'hard'. In some lessons seen by the inspector this view was confirmed. While the methods of teaching are better balanced and have more pace, often the expectations of how much a pupil can achieve and the degree of challenge that is presented is not enough to ensure good progress. Pupils are now consistently engaging in increasingly well-delivered lessons but there is a lack of consistently high expectations for pupils' learning. The tracking of pupils' attainment by the school shows this variable progress between subjects and classes and indicates that, overall, while pupils' progress is improving, it remains satisfactory rather than good.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Increase the proportion of good teaching to ensure that pupils make good progress and attainment improves by:
  - ensuring that lessons are planned to include a range of activities that relate to the needs of all pupils
  - sharing the best practice in teaching more systematically
  - satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The clarity of the leaders' roles and responsibilities for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance is much improved. The headteacher has ensured that a rigorous programme is in place. A detailed calendar outlines the activities throughout the year for the governing body, the headteacher and the curriculum leaders. A systematic approach has been taken and provides a separation of the monitoring role from the evaluating role. This ensures that an impartial view is obtained about the success of the plans for improvement. A new reporting format provides consistent information for the senior leaders and governors. Training for staff and governors has taken place to equip them with the necessary skills to fulfil their monitoring roles. The tracking system for pupils' attainment and progress has been simplified to make it more accessible for teachers and governors.

The governors are providing a greater degree of challenge to the school's leaders. Minutes of meetings show many more questions from governors to the headteacher about the pupils' progress and achievement. The training they have completed is being put to effective use in meetings and when analysing data. The chair and vice-chair have an increasingly accurate and comprehensive understanding of the school's relative strengths and weaknesses. They have a secure view of the vision for the school's future in the immediate and longer term.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Establish a rigorous system for monitoring and evaluating provision and outcomes – good
- Develop the role of the governing body in evaluation and in challenging the school to improve through additional training – good

## External support

The local authority continues to give good support to the school. The range of consultants and advisers are well received by the school staff. They have made effective contributions to developing teaching and management skills across the school. The School Improvement Partner provides appropriate challenge to the school's leaders and her reports are an accurate commentary and evaluation of the school's progress and improvement.