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Miss Price
The Headteacher
Dundry Church of England Primary School
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Dear Miss Price

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Dundry Church of England Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 29 June 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. I would be grateful if you can pass on my thanks to everyone who helped me during the day, including the Chair of the Governing Body, members of staff, pupils and your School Improvement Partner.

The school has experienced a period of substantial change since the previous inspection. In September 2010, the number of classes reduced from four to three reflecting a reduction in the number of pupils registered at the school. In January 2011, one teacher left the school and was replaced. There have been further changes in staffing due to maternity leave and long-term absence.

As a result of the inspection on 21 and 22 October 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

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 in English has risen since the previous inspection. In 2010, the national tests taken by pupils in Year 6 showed that attainment in English was above, but not significantly different, to the average. This was largely due to improvements in writing that resulted in pupils making good progress and a marked increase in the proportion of pupils who reached Level 5. Similar tests for



mathematics showed that attainment was lower than in the previous year and lower than average proportions of pupils attained the expected and higher levels. The school rightly prioritised mathematics as an area for improvement this year. Pupils' work in books and the school's most recent assessment information shows that the school has maintained the improvement in writing and has begun to raise standards in mathematics. For example, there has been a marked rise in the proportion of pupils securely attaining the expected levels and higher levels in mathematics in Year 2. Some variability remains in the attainment and rates of progress in other year groups, particularly in Key Stage 2. One reason for this is the legacy of underachievement that was identified in the previous inspection report. Another reason is that actions taken to improve teaching and raise standards are not sufficiently established in all classes.

The school's determined efforts to raise standards in writing have been supported by well-focused plans for improvement. Greater use is made of assessment information to review the progress that pupils make and plan further action when progress slows. The school's increased focus on spelling, grammar and punctuation is evidenced in classroom displays and the explicit teaching of specific literacy skills. Phonic sessions observed during the inspection were characterised by a brisk pace, a careful match of tasks to abilities and a good range of activities for younger pupils to say, hear and write. On occasions, staff did not model or emphasise the key skills and important vocabulary with sufficient clarity.

Trips and visits provide regular opportunities for pupils to write for different purposes and audiences. For example, a recent visit to Cheddar Gorge provided pupils in Year 2 and Year 3 with opportunities to write non-chronological reports, recount and explanatory texts. The school has implemented an agreed set of symbols to ensure that marking identifies what pupils have done well and the steps they need to take to improve their work. Teachers' comments are increasingly detailed and informative, but the quality of marking is not consistent in every class. Older pupils, spoken to during the inspection, talked enthusiastically about how the use of new technologies to broadcast 'live marking' helped them understand how to improve their work. The school recognises the need to provide more opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work and that of others so they have a better understanding of what is required.

Observation of pupils' learning in a sample of lessons and in books confirms the school's view that the quality of teaching has improved. Staff training, visits to other schools and clear guidance from the headteacher are increasing consistency between classes. In most lessons seen, learning intentions built on previous learning and were revisited during the lesson. Pupils were suitably challenged because tasks were carefully matched to their needs and abilities. Teaching assistants provided encouraging support for those who need it. While learning targets and 'success ladders' are gaining greater prominence in classrooms and books, they are not fully utilised by pupils to move learning on. Despite the improving picture the unevenness in progress across the school shows there remains ground to be made up.



The turbulence in staffing has limited the school's progress in developing subject leadership across the school. The headteacher has modelled and mentored staff very well, providing clear expectations and detailed guidance. Greater use is made of pupils' performance information to set priorities and inform plans for improvement. Consequently, subject monitoring reports are informative and staff have a greater understanding of the role. The school recognises that individual subject leaders should play a greater role in raising ambition and securing the necessary changes.

Members of the governing body have utilised training from the local authority and implemented new ways of working. For example, each member is paired with a subject leader and provided with evaluation questions to support their visits. These changes have increased accountability and provided a greater level of challenge. They have also enabled members of the governing body to make a stronger contribution to self-evaluation.

The school appreciates the effective support the local authority provides, for instance through the support programme for improving schools and the work of subject advisers and the School Improvement Partner. Such external support has enabled the school to continue its improvement during a period of considerable change.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Hancock

Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

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

- Improve standards in writing by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities to practise their basic spelling, punctuation and grammar skills in subjects across the curriculum
 - ensuring that the marking system is consistently applied throughout the school so that pupils fully understand what they need to do to improve their work.
- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in Years 3 and 4, to be at least satisfactory, with 75% good or better by the end of July 2010.
- Develop the role of subject leaders by:
 - giving them opportunities to observe best practice in other schools so that they can more effectively monitor their own subjects
 - developing their confidence in using information from assessments to identify priorities and inform actions to be taken.
- Ensure that governors' visits to the school are more focused and closely aligned to priorities identified in the school development plan.