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22 October 2010

Mrs Patricia Lunn
Headteacher
St Gerard's Catholic Primary School
Park Nook, Doncaster Road
Thrybergh,
Rotherham
South Yorkshire
S65 4AE

Dear Mrs Lunn

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Gerard's Catholic Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 21 October 2010, 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 pass on my thanks to the governors, the local authority representative and the pupils I spoke to. They were very helpful.

Since the last inspection three of the five class teachers have left the school. There has also been some restructuring of staff responsibilities. Two of the vacant posts have been filled but the third is being covered by a supply teacher.

As a result of the inspection on 2 and 3 July 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.

In 2009, pupils' achievement and attainment in mathematics and English was significantly below national averages by the end of Key Stage 2. The 2010 national test data show some improvements have been secured. Their attainment in English exceeded national averages and 100% of the cohort made the expected progress over the Key Stage. However, in mathematics there was a fall in the proportion of pupils reaching age-related expectations, and in those making the expected progress over the Key Stage. A series of lesson visits with senior leaders showed pupils' progress was variable.

September 2010



The school's latest tracking data shows that pupils are making faster progress but there are variations within year groups and across subjects.

The quality of teaching and assessment, and its impact on pupils' learning and progress is also variable. There is some good and improving practise but there remains weaker practise that is hampering pupils' efforts to recover the lost ground in their knowledge, skills and understanding, and to close the attainment gap between themselves and national averages. The extent to which pupils, including those of middle ability receive opportunities to practise their skills, demonstrate their understanding, and are given work that is challenging and well-matched to their capabilities is too variable. The school has introduced strategies to address these inconsistencies but to date these actions have not yet had the full impact intended.

Leaders and managers main focus has been on enhancing pupils' literacy skills which has had some success. They are now turning their attention to mathematics where they believe they can replicate the positive impact they have had on English. To this end they have begun to plan opportunities for pupils to reinforce their mathematical skills across the curriculum. However, monitoring and evaluation needs to be more rigorous and regular to ensure that all staff adhere to agreed procedures and strategies for teaching, assessment, and feedback to pupils. The school is introducing a set of non-negotiable aspects to staff planning and delivery to promote a greater consistency in the aforementioned areas. The effective Early Years Foundation Stage provision and the improved outcomes in English at Key Stage 2 reflect the school's capacity to improve further.

Local authority support to the school has been effective. The school is now part of the 'good school' programme which gives it access to the services of a consultant headteacher and additional finance. This has been important in funding the on-going one-to-one literacy tuition and booster classes which helped pupils in Year 6 last year, to make rapid progress and exceed their targets. The school is also acting on the good, school improvement advice and guidance they have received from the consultant. Members of the governing body have had training that has clarified their roles. They are devising more effective ways of assessing the school's effectiveness, and beginning to challenge the school in order to drive further improvement.

This monitoring visit included a check on the school's safeguarding procedures and found them to be secure and meeting current requirements.

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

John Young
Her Majesty's Inspector

September 2010

Annex

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

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching in Key Stage 2, especially with regard to the level of challenge provided for middle ability pupils.