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Mr R Sudlow
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Sudlow

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Holy Family Catholic School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 30 November 2010 and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the pupils, staff, Chair of the Governing Body and the local authority representative, who all attended meetings at short notice.

As a result of the inspection on 22 and 23 April 2010, 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 is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The headteacher and governors responded positively after the inspection in April, carefully analysing the issues in the report. The local authority has provided good support for the school, working with the headteacher and governors to create a clear plan for improvement and providing professional guidance. New systems, such as those that track pupils' progress, have been introduced and staff have been receptive to any suggestions for improvement. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the school's work have been rigorous, developmental and supportive. Good involvement of the governing body is playing a valuable role in this. For example, after senior leaders observe lessons, and scrutinise lesson plans and pupils' work, they give teachers clear points for improvement and check that those areas have been acted upon. As a result, self-evaluation is being used more rigorously to identify the most important areas of weakness and devise plans to tackle them.

Governors, senior leaders and staff are resolute in their determination to move forward in improving outcomes for pupils.

The school has recently appointed a deputy headteacher with the enthusiasm and skills to help the school develop. As a result, there is a secure leadership team with skills that complement each other.

Year 6 teacher assessments show that attainment in English at the expected Level 4 remained broadly similar to that in 2009, while in mathematics it dropped. Key Stage 1 assessments indicate that attainment in reading, writing and mathematics dropped from that in 2009. However, this class had been taught by a number of different teachers over the course of Year 1 and Year 2. Senior leaders have taken action to halt the underachievement of this group through the introduction of intensive support packages. Inspection evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' books and the school's information on pupils' progress shows that progress is starting to improve across the school.

This improvement in pupils' progress is due to improved teaching. The school has a stable staffing complement; the first time in four years. Morale of the staff, which fell after the inspection, is now much improved. Classrooms are bright and well organised; good use is made of pupils' work to provide an interesting environment in which to learn. A whole-school approach to planning lessons focuses on the objectives for pupils' learning, and success criteria are used well to enable pupils to understand what they are learning during the lesson. Teaching assistants provide valuable support to individual and groups of pupils. However, there is an opportunity for all staff to promote more independence by sharing with pupils what they will learn next, using effective questioning to promote deep thinking and providing resources for pupils to take control of their learning. A few teachers are trialling the use of setting pupils targets with a view to establishing a whole-school approach. As noted at the inspection, marking affirms pupils' efforts and a few teachers give clear guidance on how work can be improved. Senior leaders have the chance to extend this good practice and link it with the development of target-setting to accelerate pupils' progress.

Governors took determined action to tackle the weaknesses identified at the inspection. Roles, responsibilities and committee membership were reviewed and training undertaken. This has led to a renewed purpose in their work and confidence to hold senior leaders to account. For example, the new system for checking pupils' progress is generating information which governors look forward to receiving and analysing at the end of this term. Governors have improved knowledge about the day-to-day running of the school. The process is taking place to appoint to the vacancy of parent governor.

A member of staff has worked successfully to lead the school in the promotion of community cohesion. An audit of the school's context has taken place and an action plan implemented. Pupils have enjoyed activities such as French day and the school

is exploring the chance for pupils to collaborate with those from different backgrounds.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils' welfare, safety and security meet government requirements. There is a clear system for governors to check that these arrangements are effective. Staff and governors have invested much time to ensure that all is done to keep pupils safe.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose and meets requirements. Support and challenge have been concerted, effective and organised to meet the needs of the school.

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

Eileen Mulgrew
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2010.

- Ensure that systems and procedures for safeguarding pupils are rigorous and meet all statutory requirements.
- Ensure that, in order to secure the necessary capacity to improve, school planning is sharply focused on the most important areas that the school needs to tackle, identified through accurate and rigorous self-evaluation.
- Improve the promotion of community cohesion so that pupils develop a much greater awareness of faiths and cultures other than their own.
- Increase the involvement of the governing body in bringing about improvements to the school.
- Accelerate pupils' progress by improving the quality and consistency of teaching, particularly at Key Stage 1 and in some mixed-age classes, by increasing pace, challenge and the use of information and communication technology.