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Mr M Gallagher
Headteacher
St Aloysius RC Primary School Federation
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Dear Mr Gallagher

Ofsted survey inspection programme: leadership of more than one school

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 16 and 17 November 2010 to look at the leadership of the federation.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to a national report. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributors or contributing institutions but individuals and institutions will not be identified in the main text without your consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with the federation's senior leaders, governors, staff, parents, the school improvement partner and pupils; and the scrutiny of relevant documentation.

The effectiveness of the federation leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement is good.

Context

The St Aloysius RC Primary Federation consists of St Aloysius Infant and Junior Schools. The federation is at a very early stage of development. The schools were federated in September 2009 and during the federation's first year the individual schools were led by acting headteachers. The federation's substantive headteacher took up post in September 2010.

Outcomes

- Children enter the Foundation Stage with below expected levels of attainment. Standards at Key Stage 1 have been very high over a number of years but have declined more recently and are now broadly average.

This trend has coincided with a period of staffing changes in one of the Year 2 classes.

- At Key Stage 2 standards have been considerably above average in English and mathematics in recent years. In 2009, a significantly higher than average proportion of pupils also reached the higher Level 5 in national tests. Over time, the majority of pupils have made either satisfactory or significantly better than average progress in their learning. In 2009, 90% of pupils made at least two Levels progress in English and 87% did so in mathematics.
- Each school has tracked pupils' performance accurately over a number of years and both schools have well-proven intervention programmes which have tackled under-achievement successfully. The good progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is testimony to their effectiveness.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school, showing great respect for the safety and welfare of others. The school is calm and pupils are industrious in lessons demonstrating positive attitudes and a keenness to complete their work.

Provision

- Inspection evidence shows that the quality of teaching is good. Aply supported by the senior team, you have moved quickly to establish a secure focus on monitoring the quality of teaching and to build on the processes already in place in both schools. This evidence is being used successfully to promote discussion about improving teaching across the federation.
- Your analysis of the performance of both schools is clear and precise. This has provided a basis for staff consultation and has established whole-federation accountability for pupils' performance and progress. Target-setting is rigorous and expectations are high. You have built successfully on systems already in place in both schools, and are being ably supported in this work by other senior leaders.

Leadership and management

- You and the senior staff share a clear vision for the federation which is securely focused on delivering high-quality education and the achievement of high standards.
- Governors firmly share this ambition. The strength of their resolve in pursuing federation in order to strengthen the overall leadership of both schools has been robust. During 2009–10 they worked industriously to re-align the organisation of the governing body around the needs of the federation and this has been managed well.
- In the first year of federation, the acting headteachers and governors successfully maintained the individual identities of each school. This did much to underpin staff and parent confidence in the federation while a

substantive headteacher was being appointed. Those parents who were interviewed during the visit expressed confidence in the federation and your initial impact.

- With you in place, and keeping the two deputy headteacher posts, both schools run smoothly on a day-to-day basis while you divide your time equally between both establishments. This has quickly established your profile in both schools.
- Senior staff and governors have moved swiftly to engender the support and active involvement of staff in promoting the federation as a vehicle for improvement. Consequently, staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the federation, its aims and perceived benefits.
- The federation development plan reflects the priorities espoused by governors and senior leaders and provides a secure context for improvement. The plan however lacks detailed success criteria from which progress can be adequately assessed. In addition, there is no clear separation of role between those who will monitor the plan's progress and those who will evaluate the impact of the actions taken.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the success criteria in the federation action plan are sufficiently precise to enable an accurate assessment of progress to be undertaken
- ensuring that there is a clear separation of responsibilities between those who will monitor the progress of the action plan and those who will evaluate the impact of this work.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop leadership in the federation.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection.

Yours sincerely

Tom Grieveson
Her Majesty's Inspector