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Mrs Sharon Aston
Headteacher
The Catholic School of Saint Gregory
St James Square
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
GL50 3QG

Dear Mrs Aston

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of The Catholic School of St Gregory.

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 16 November 2010 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. In particular, I would like to thank the members of the governing body and the local authority adviser for coming into school to meet with me.

Since the inspection there have been significant staff changes. In September 2010 an assistant headteacher, six teachers, and five teaching assistants took up their new appointments in school. The leadership team has been expanded and now includes phase leaders for the Early Years Foundation Stage/Key Stage 1, lower Key Stage 2 and upper Key Stage 2. There are also new subject leaders for English, mathematics, science and religious education. There are now one third of pupils speaking English as an additional language and 20 different languages are spoken. The highest proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language are those whose home language is Polish and Tagalog. There has been some remodelling of the school building.

As a result of the inspection on 16 March 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 good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Standards at the end of Year 6 have risen and the latest data for English and mathematics, yet to be validated, confirms the school's evaluation that they are now in line with national results and continuing to improve. Pupils' achievement in Key Stage 2 has accelerated because teaching is never less than good and specific

underachieving groups are now being sensitively targeted and well supported. For example, teaching staff guide pupils who speak English as an additional language by helping them with key vocabulary prior to specific lessons. All lessons are well planned and this ensures that all pupils know what they should achieve by the end of the session, and this helps them evaluate their own learning. High-quality classroom displays provide pupils with learning tools, and the modelling of best practice by the teachers during lessons ensures that the pupils have clear expectations of what is required of them. Visual learning aids, such as effective use of interactive whiteboards and simple body action rhymes, help them to consolidate their learning. For instance, a simple movement and accompanying phrase was devised to help pupils remember what to do with each digit when they multiplied by 10. Lessons move at a fast pace and there is a good balance between teacher and pupil involvement. This ensures that pupils remain engaged and motivated in their learning. Exceptionally well-briefed teaching assistants provide high-quality support for those pupils who find learning challenging. Using the detailed information collated during these focused sessions, the next step in learning for each individual pupil is planned and prepared for in collaboration with the class teacher. The consistent approach of 'DUMTUMS', which is an acronym for reminding pupils to represent their work in a consistent manner, has been a pivotal point in the good improvement of the standard of presentation.

The renewed curriculum framework, teaching English, mathematics and science as discrete subjects, is now ensuring that all pupils make consistent progress in these key skills. The much greater emphasis on linking science to everyday life through engaging displays and working with specialists, such as forensic scientists, has motivated the pupils to delve into the subject much more. The introduction of a comprehensive assessment system for science is ensuring that all pupils make appropriate progress as they move through the school.

The success of improvement initiatives can be attributed to the development of a greater delegation of accountability by all leaders and managers. In conjunction with the senior leadership team, the leaders of specific age groups have successfully developed clear systems which monitor the quality of teaching and measure its impact on pupils' learning. As a result of a consistent and robust approach to lesson observations and openness in sharing the outcomes of these sessions, the quality of the teaching profile has significantly improved. The senior leadership team and other leaders scrutinise the pupils' work books regularly and confirm that the quality of marking has vastly improved. Good-quality work is acknowledged with concise explanations given to support the pupils along the next step of their learning journey. Pupils are very clear about the targets they are given for improvement and older pupils have a good understanding about the levels they are working at in relation to national norms. The engagement of the school with families remains a high priority for the school and the manner, in which vulnerable groups are supported, not only in their academic studies but with personal issues, is second to none. As one parent summed up in the most recent parent/carer questionnaire, 'St

Gregory's is extremely caring towards the children, rewarding them for good work/behaviour and giving them confidence.'

The school has made effective use of the high-quality support from the local authority English and mathematics teaching consultants and the lead teacher for science. The statement of action and plan produced by the local authority meets all requirements. The new school improvement partner has also challenged the senior leaders and governors in their drive to raise standards. This has enabled them to tighten and refine their systems for monitoring. Parents, carers and the local community are extremely supportive of the work of the school and as one parent explained, 'St Gregory's can be proud of their school and their staff members.'

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

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing, mathematics and science in Key Stage 2, particularly by:
 - ensuring consistently high expectations of the quality of pupils' writing and standard of presentation
 - making certain that activities planned in mathematics sets take account of the pupils' individual abilities
 - developing a secure science curriculum for all year groups
 - implementing a system that allows pupils' progress in science to be checked carefully.

- Improve the quality of teaching across all subjects in Key Stage 2 by:
 - providing clear explanations to pupils at the beginning of lessons so that they understand exactly what is required of them and they can make good progress when working independently
 - rising teachers' expectations and ensuring that all lessons have sufficient pace and challenge
 - providing work that is carefully matched to pupils' abilities
 - making more effective use of pupils' academic targets and consistently providing good-quality marking so that pupils know exactly what to do to improve their work.