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Mrs Elaine Grimshaw
Executive Headteacher
St Antony's RC Primary School
Shadsworth Road
Blackburn
Lancashire
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Dear Mrs Grimshaw

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of St Antony's RC Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 9 December 2010 and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the link school improvement officer, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and to the pupils who gave up their time to talk to me.

In November 2010 the associate headteacher was appointed as the substantive headteacher and she will take up this position in April 2011. Until that time she is the executive headteacher of St Antony's Primary School as well as St Mary and St Joseph's Primary School. The two schools work in collaboration. The permanent deputy headteacher left the school at the end of the last academic year. The temporary Year 6 teacher who was previously the assistant headteacher is now the acting deputy headteacher and another permanent member of staff is the acting assistant headteacher. The governing body has been replaced by an Interim Executive Board. A new Nursery teacher and a teacher for Year 1 started in September 2010.

As a result of the inspection on 28 and 29 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.

Following the last inspection the local authority took effective action to secure the services of the associate headteacher until St Anthony's was able to appoint a permanent headteacher. She continues to lead the school effectively and ensure the

morale of staff remains good. On 10 June 2010, following the publication of the last inspection report, the local authority submitted an application to the Secretary of State for consent to replace the governing body with an Interim Executive Board. Approval was granted on 30 July 2010 and, without any further delay, the board was officially established. Since then the board members have met several times and are gaining an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas requiring improvement. They have moved quickly to stabilise the leadership by appointing a substantive headteacher. Their next priority is to pursue key appointments for the senior leadership team in order to strengthen the leadership further and bring greater rigour to the school's self-evaluation processes. Although the school has systems in place for monitoring and evaluating its work and checking pupils' progress, these are currently insufficiently robust in securing improvement. This is due mainly to the continual changes that there have been at senior management level. The local authority and Interim Executive Board are working closely with the diocese to establish a new governing body as soon as possible.

The school has provided a teacher for the Nursery and now meets its statutory requirements in relation to this. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is now more secure. The Reception teacher and the Nursery teacher work closely together and further improvements have been made to planning and assessing children's achievements. During the inspection the teaching observed was good and children clearly enjoyed their learning. A strong focus was given to developing children's language and communication skills. The Early Years Foundation Stage profile results for the end of Reception in 2010 indicate an improving trend in outcomes in all areas of learning. This is providing a better foundation for improving attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in the future.

The unvalidated results for the end of Key Stage 2 in 2010 indicate that attainment was low with a significant decline in English when compared to previous years. In mathematics attainment has been low for a number of years. An analysis of the school's data shows that the pupils in Year 6 last year made accelerated progress throughout the year. This improvement in progress over the year reflected a focus of intensive catch-up work for these pupils but it was not enough to make up fully for their earlier underachievement. Throughout the school there is evidence of improvement in pupils' rate of progress but this is not strong enough across all classes. This is because the teaching is not of a consistently good enough quality. In Key Stage 2, progress is strongest in Years 5 and 6. In the lessons seen, teaching was mostly satisfactory, although some was good. This aligns with the school's view. In all the lessons seen pupils' behaviour and relationships were positive features. While work has been done to improve teachers' planning, it is more effective in meeting pupils' different needs in some classes than others. The school is working in collaboration with St Mary and St Joseph's to share good practice and improve the quality of teaching. This is having a positive effect, particularly in relation to raising expectations of pupils' achievement. Targets are shared with pupils but their knowledge and use of them to improve their progress is variable. Pupils in Year 6 have a good understanding of the levels they are working at and how to reach the

next level. The use of success criteria to move pupils' learning on is inconsistent and not fully effective.

The Interim Executive Board is developing a clear understanding of the school's current context and historical issues. The school is collaborating well with neighbouring schools with contrasting profiles in order to increase its effectiveness in promoting community cohesion. Pupils have worked, prayed and played alongside each other in a number of joint initiatives, such as residential activities and fund-raising events for those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils commented very positively about the increased opportunities to learn and mix with pupils from different backgrounds and make new friends.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose and fulfils requirements. Support for the school has been effective and well considered to meet the needs of the school. Both the local authority and the Interim Executive Board are aware that the school now needs to establish sustainable leadership as a matter of urgency in order to improve pupils' achievement further before its next section 5 inspection.

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

Brenda McIntosh

Additional inspector

Annex

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

- By January 2011 improve the role of the governing body in shaping the direction of the school, specifically ensuring that it has the leadership it needs to secure the improvements already made and to implement its development plans successfully.
- Ensure that all statutory requirements are met by providing a teacher for the Nursery by September 2010.
- By 2011 improve attainment and achievement by:
 - ensuring that all lessons include sufficient challenge for pupils, in particular for the more able in English and mathematics.
- Extend the positive work done on community cohesion in the school, to the wider community and beyond by 2011.