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19 January 2011

Mrs C Seagraves  
Headteacher  
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School  
Poulton Street  
Ashton  
Preston  
Lancashire  
PR2 2SA

Dear Mrs Seagraves

### **Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 18 Jan 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to your staff and pupils for the welcome they gave me and to your governing body and local authority representatives.

Since the May 2010 inspection there have been a number of new appointments to the school. This includes a bursar, a number of teaching assistants, a part-time special educational needs coordinator (SENCO), an Early Years Foundation Stage teacher and a deputy headteacher. During the visit the Key Stage 1 class was being taught by two part-time teachers due to the absence of the class teacher through illness.

As a result of the inspection on 17 – 18 May 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 2010 Key Stage 2 validated results represent an improvement from the school's results in 2009. Attainment in English increased to above the national average but attainment in mathematics remained below the national average. Key Stage 2 pupils made greater progress in their learning in 2010 than they did in 2009. However, boys underachieved in relation to their starting points in English and mathematics, girls underperformed in mathematics and higher-ability pupils did not reach the highest levels. At Key Stage 1, unvalidated teacher assessments indicate attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is well below the national average. Middle and higher-ability pupils did not achieve the highest levels and results in writing were particularly low.

Inspection evidence shows early signs of improvement. The school's detailed tracking data, moderated by the local authority's monitoring and intervention team, show that the majority

January 2011



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

of pupils at Key Stage 2 are now making better progress in their learning. Pupils are making much greater progress in mathematics. Improved use of assessment information ensures the majority of teachers can identify pupils' learning needs and provide appropriate teaching, intervention and support. However, the school's targets for Key Stage 2 pupils in 2011 are unlikely to be met because of the gaps between expected levels and current attainment as a result of previous low expectations and underachievement. Data, as well as school and local authority monitoring of teaching and pupils' work in Key Stage 1 show that these pupils are not making the progress they should. More rapid gains are required in learning to ensure pupils catch up and reach the standards they are capable of achieving by the end of Key Stage 1.

Significant improvements have been made to the quality of teaching since the last inspection, although there remains some variation across the school. There is a need to strengthen teaching in Key Stage 1. The majority of lessons observed were judged to be good and the rest were satisfactory. Most teachers and teaching assistants make lessons interesting, enjoyable and challenging. Pupils have more opportunities to learn through independent and collaborative practical activities and to investigate, particularly in mathematics and science. The pace of learning has improved in lessons because pupils are more actively involved in their own learning and work is more carefully matched to meet pupils' differing learning needs. Effective use is now made of questioning to help pupils think and learn. Questioning is also used well to ensure that teaching is focused on addressing pupils' misconceptions and the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. A new marking and feedback policy has been introduced. This has led to greater consistency of marking practice in Key Stage 2 and helped pupils to improve their own work. Pupil-friendly targets introduced in English and mathematics ensure older pupils understand the levels they are working at and what they are working towards.

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved as a result of relocation and rebuilding work. This has enabled children to have continuous access to the outdoor environment. Extensive opportunities now exist for children to learn both independently and collaboratively across all areas of learning, both indoors and out. The new team of adults are working together well. This ensures there is a high level of consistency in meeting the emotional, social and language needs of the children in their care. As a result, the children have settled into routines quickly and share, work and play well together.

A new behaviour and relationships policy has been introduced, though behaviour remains satisfactory overall. Attendance rates fell, in the autumn term of 2010, to below the national average. The school is carefully monitoring attendance rates and has put a number of strategies in place to promote improved attendance.

The leadership and management of the school have been strengthened with the appointment of the SENCO, a deputy headteacher and by increasing the expectations of subject leaders. Much has been achieved in laying the foundations for further improvement, based on a realistic evaluation of how well the school is doing and prioritising improvements to ensure weaknesses are tackled. The school's standards and effectiveness

committee and the local authority through termly reviews of progress have carefully monitored the progress the school has made in relation to the areas for improvement. In addition, the school has accurately identified the need to improve its work in relation to supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

After the inspection in May 2010, the local authority submitted an action plan outlining how it would improve the school. Ofsted judged that this plan was fit for purpose. Extensive support had been provided by senior leaders from other local schools, the monitoring and intervention team and a number of advisers and consultants. The staff development provided has been particularly valued by the school. The impact of this support is evident in improvements to the quality of teaching, the pace of progress pupils make in their learning and the significant improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage provision.

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

Angela Milner  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010**

- Raise the pace of pupils' learning and progress from satisfactory to good by:
  - ensuring that lessons are varied and suitably challenging for all groups
  - developing the range and rigour of teachers' questioning skills
  - ensuring consistency in teachers' marking so that it guides pupils to set out their thinking and tells them how to improve
  - promoting independent learning through extending opportunities for investigative and practical work.
  
- Improve provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
  - providing extensive opportunities for independent learning and collaborative play outdoors
  - ensuring consistency in the way adults meet the emotional, social and language needs of children.