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Mrs Jean Richmond
St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Richmond

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 19 January 2011, for the time you gave to our discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please thank the chair of governors and your external improvement partner as well as the pupils who gave up their time to come and speak to me.

Since the last inspection, a substantive headteacher has been appointed. Five teaching staff have left. There are currently three newly qualified teachers in the school and a new senior leadership team. One teacher was absent during the inspection. Building work has successfully enlarged some classrooms and created other useful working spaces. The Reception class has additional access to outdoor learning. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has risen substantially to 57% of all pupils and the school roll is also up.

As a result of the inspection on 23 and 24 September 2009, 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 has made good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

In 2010, the attainment of the smaller than average group of Year 6 pupils was broadly average and an improvement on recent years. This included some able pupils who attained the more advanced level in English and mathematics. In science, there was more focus on investigations, and standards also began improving.



Currently, children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage despite many arriving with very low levels of skills in communication and personal and social learning when compared to those expected for their age. In Key Stage 1, they make rapid progress and begin to catch up to the expected level. Progress across Key Stage 2 is broadly at the expected rate. However, pupils in Year 3 are receiving a boost through an extra support programme involving mixed Years 3/4 groups as they have a large proportion of pupils who did not start their education at the school. Across the school, attainment in writing rightly remains a focus for improvement and the well coordinated reading and letters and sounds programme is having an impressive impact on the rate of progress of the vast majority of pupils. Pieces of pupils' writing have recently been formally published as they did so well in a Midlands writing competition.

Pupils achieve now more across the broader curriculum, including music, art and French. The new provision in information and communication technology builds pupils' confidence and they are well aware of e-safety issues. Pupils have developed a good knowledge of how to keep healthy and enjoy the cookery club. Older ones confidently help younger ones and are justifiably proud of the school council's accomplishments, such as the new bike storage to encourage more to cycle to school. The majority of pupils behave well.

Teaching is much improved. The lessons observed showed that it is consistently good. One outstanding lesson was especially lively and offered good opportunities for role play as pupils considered how to describe and write about the infirmities of an elderly character. Teachers' planning and the match of tasks to individual pupils are carefully monitored. More accurate assessment of pupils' learning ensures work is at the right level. Marking shows pupils how and where they can improve but could be even further developed to involve the pupils. Any pupil in danger of falling behind receives prompt support. Many benefit from the one-to-one coaching scheme. There is good support for children who are looked after. Carefully devised and delivered programmes help the wide range of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with emotional and behavioural needs. Pupils receive an exceptionally good quality of care, guidance and support. The school works in strong partnership with other local services to support children and families.

Leadership and management are good. The school now has an able substantive headteacher and a settled senior leadership team. Recent parental questionnaires drew a broadly positive response although there is more to do to successfully engage carers. All staff have high expectations and show determination to drive up attainment further. The monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous and leads to good ongoing development for all teachers, including those who are newly qualified. One assistant headteacher is free of classroom responsibilities to help support specific groups as well as monitoring the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers are held fully accountable for the progress of the pupils in their class. English and mathematics coordinators are on the leadership



team. The new headteacher has had a very positive impact. She has overseen the improvements to the building and together with the special educational needs coordinator gathered resources to help children in a wide variety of ways. The improved quality of teaching and learning, and accurate school-wide pupils' progress tracking show the school has a good capacity to improve further. Safeguarding procedures are thorough and secure. The governing body and the external school support partner provide the school with strong support and valuable challenge. As a result, the school development plan is a good blueprint for the further development of the school.

Yours sincerely

Mo Roberts

Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2009

- Further raise standards by:
 - ensuring all groups of pupils make good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and particularly science as they move through the school
 - consistently providing challenging tasks for more able pupils.

- Ensure teaching is consistently good or better in Key Stages 1 and 2 by:
 - ensuring teachers use assessments of pupils' learning to move pupils more quickly on to their next stage of learning during lessons
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to take greater responsibility for their own learning.

- Ensure that leaders and managers at all levels have a greater impact on school improvement by:
 - more rigorously monitoring the quality of teaching and learning
 - more frequently analysing the progress of all groups of pupils in order to rapidly reduce the variations in pupils' performance between classes and across subjects.