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Mrs M Green
St Peter's Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Green

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Peter's Catholic Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 2 March 2011, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. I am also grateful to the local authority representative and the vice-chair of the governing body who gave their time to speak to me. Please pass on my thanks to the staff who also spent time in conversation with me and to the pupils for being so friendly and helpful.

The basic characteristics of your school are very similar to those at the time of the last inspection. However, since then the school has been through a turbulent time with regard to its staffing and senior leaders. Both the literacy and the numeracy coordinator and one other class teacher have left the school. New literacy and numeracy coordinators have been in post since September 2010 and a new class teacher was also appointed at this time. There are six new members of the governing body. A local authority review in December 2010 has helped refine the school's direction.

As a result of the inspection on 30 June 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:

satisfactory progress in making improvements

and

satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The school is successfully emerging from a difficult period. The good leadership of the headteacher has stabilised the school and ensured that significant improvements took place, but the pace was slower than it should have been. With the good support of the local authority and a new team of senior leaders, the pace of driving and securing improvement has quickened and there is an upward trend in pupil outcomes.

Attainment at the end of Year 6 improved from significantly below in 2009 to broadly average in 2010. However, attainment in mathematics was below average. This year, a large majority of pupils in every year group are on track to reach age-related expectations or above in reading, writing and mathematics with the exception of Year 6 mathematics. Progress has improved in all year groups but it is very recent and the school recognises that more needs to be done. The current Year 6 left Key Stage 1 with levels of attainment that were significantly below average. Since then, despite difficult circumstances, the school has worked hard to target interventions and close the learning gaps. As a result, over the key stage, the majority of Year 6 pupils have made better than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. An increased emphasis on challenging more able pupils has resulted in a higher percentage of pupils on track to reach Level 5 in mathematics and exceed the school target.

High quality training has ensured that staff are increasingly confident in the assessments they make. Moderation has confirmed that those assessments are now accurate. Teachers now have a better understanding of their pupils and planning is now matched more precisely to pupils' needs with more able pupils undertaking more challenging tasks. Good assessment procedures in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensure that activities match the full range of children's needs. In Key Stages 1 and 2 most pupils, including the more able, say that their work is at the right level. However, a few say that they sometimes find the work too easy. In classes where learning is more active, the rate of progress increases, pupils are more motivated and see the relevance of their learning.

The majority of teachers regularly give pupils clear advice and guidance on how to improve their work and pupils find this helpful. However, not all teachers give pupils time to make those improvements and this slows the pace of progress. The school recognises that this good practice now needs to be extended to supply and temporary staff in order to improve consistency.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher ensured that teaching and learning were regularly monitored throughout the period when the school was without two of its senior leaders due to long-term ill health. Now that there is a full leadership team the school has an increased capacity to monitor and evaluate its work. The literacy and numeracy coordinators have undertaken paired observations with consultants

from the local authority and these are improving the rigour of monitoring and bringing about a sharper edge to lesson observations. Areas for development are more precise and are beginning to enable senior leaders to measure the effectiveness of the implementation of initiatives that are introduced more accurately.

The headteacher's clear lead ensures that senior leaders, members of the governing body and staff are clearly focused on raising pupils' achievement and promoting high standards of care. The new leadership team is clear about its roles and responsibilities and is keenly focused on driving ambition and securing improvement. Recent training has meant that members of the governing body are becoming increasingly more knowledgeable and better equipped to play a more influential part in the strategic direction of the school. The school receives good support from the local authority in terms of refining direction and training for staff and new senior leaders. All of this has enabled the school to advance quickly and securely over a short period of time. Attendance, which was average at the time of the last inspection, is now above average as a result of the school's successful actions. Levels of attainment are rising and the rate of progress is accelerating throughout the school. The literacy and numeracy coordinators have made a detailed audit of their areas. Along with the headteacher and deputy headteacher and members of the governing body they have established an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and these are reflected in the school's coherent plans for improvement.

The strong leadership of the headteacher, a new leadership team focused on improvement, a revitalized governing body and the enthusiasm and commitment of staff all mean that the school is in a better position than it was two years ago. It has made satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

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

Barbara Atcheson

Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve systems of assessment so that teachers are more aware of what pupils know and can do, and can then guide them to what they need to learn next and use this guidance when they mark their work.
- Ensure that lessons and wider activities are planned to include a variety of stimulating activities so that all pupils, particularly the more able, are suitably challenged throughout.
- Improve the rigour of monitoring, particularly of initiatives put in place, so that the effectiveness of these strategies can be measured more accurately.