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30 March 2011

Mrs C Fenna
Headteacher
St Paul's Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Fenna

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 29 March 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the staff, pupils and the local authority officer whom I met.

Since the inspection in November 2009, the school has been subject to further staffing changes including the resignation of the headteacher. A new, permanent headteacher took up post in January 2011. A new, experienced manager of the Early Years Foundation Stage took up post in September 2010.

As a result of the inspection in November 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 good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Attainment across the school remains low. In the national assessments of seven-year-olds in summer 2010, the results declined sharply on the previous year, to significantly below the national figures, continuing the highly erratic trend in performance over recent years. In contrast, the results of the tests for eleven-year-olds were broadly average. This picture reflects the work seen in lessons observed and in pupils' books. Pupils' progress across the school is uneven; it is best in Years 5 and 6 where pupils are making the greatest and most rapid progress, a reflection of the high quality teaching they are receiving. However, there remain considerable gaps in their knowledge and understanding. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson it was apparent that pupils have had limited experience of calculating weight and are unfamiliar with kilograms and grams as units of measurement. Some pupils thought that weight was measured in centimetres and / or kilometres. In Years 5 and 6, the work in pupils' books is very well presented. Written work is characterised by good attention

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to the content and to the secretarial skills, such as handwriting, spelling, grammar and punctuation. This is not the case in all year groups. In some classes, the marking of pupils' writing focuses almost exclusively on the particular objective of each lesson; pupils have their own targets but their persistent errors in core aspects, such as spelling, grammar and punctuation, are not corrected. Fifty percent of pupils in Key Stage 2 have reading ages below their chronological age, some substantially below. This deficit in reading is being tackled through a range of additional support carried out by well-deployed teaching assistants and, as a result, pupils' progress in reading is at least good and, in some individual cases, outstanding.

The outcomes for the children leaving the Early Years Foundation Stage in summer 2010, overall, were lower than those expected for this age group but, nevertheless, almost half joined Year 1 with a good level of development. The challenge for the school is to ensure that these pupils continue to make the progress of which they are capable. Currently, attainment in the Early Years Foundation Stage is rising, and children's rates of progress improving, due to the much improved provision. The Early Years Foundation Stage rooms have been completely remodelled and refurbished and a new outdoor area has been created. The planning and systems underpinning the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage have also been revised.

Attendance remains inadequate. 20 pupils out of 104 currently have attendance rates below 90%. The school is tackling the most severe cases first, those with attendance below 85%, through a range of measures including:

- greater challenge and support for families through the school's newly established multi-agency attendance panel,
- greater support from, and more frequent visits by, the Education Support Worker,
- a new range of in-school awards for good attendance.

The measures have begun to have an impact on attendance: the current whole-school attendance rate is higher than that for the last full academic year, but it is still too low. Some individual pupils' attendance is improving.

During the period following the inspection in November 2009, limited progress was made in tackling the issues identified for improvement. However, since the appointment of the new headteacher, the rate of improvement has been good and rapid. As a result of her efforts, staff morale is higher than it was and parental engagement is increasing. The quality of teaching is variable but satisfactory overall. The strongest teaching is in Years 5 and 6 and in the Early Years Foundation Stage. New assessment systems are now in place but the information it provides is not used well by all teachers consistently.

The local authority support for the school has been satisfactory. There have been some changes in the personnel supporting the school which has led to a loss of momentum.

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 Westington
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 25 and 26 November 2009

- Raise standards in all subjects, and particularly English and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that teaching is consistently good for all year groups
 - ensuring that assessment and consistent, appropriate marking of pupils' work are used well to promote better learning and progress
 - ensuring that pupils are aware of their learning targets and the best ways of meeting them.

- Improve attendance by:
 - consistently applying school policies on dealing with poor attendance.

- Improve the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - significantly improving the range and quality of resources so that teachers are able to use their skills more effectively to benefit children's learning.