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13 May 2011

Mrs Hilary Webb
The Headteacher
Our Lady's Catholic Primary School
Oxford Road
Cowley
Oxford
OX4 2LF

Dear Mrs Webb,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Our Lady's Catholic Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 May 2011. For the time you gave to our phone discussion and the time you and two of your senior leaders gave during my pre-inspection visit and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also thank the Chair of the Governing Body and the pupils, who gave their time to speak to me.

Since the last inspection, there have been some staff changes. Two class teachers have left the school. An additional assistant headteacher and another class teacher have been appointed. Two teachers have also taken up new responsibilities as the Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 leaders. The assistant headteacher and the two new key stage leaders have joined the senior leadership team. There is now a designated leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage.. Another class teacher has recently resigned and the class is being taught by a long-term supply teacher at present.

As a result of the inspection on 28 and 29 January 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 has made good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

After the last inspection, the governing body acted swiftly to strengthen leadership and management, by appointing an additional assistant headteacher and creating a new senior leadership structure within the school. This has allowed the school to more evenly distribute the management tasks undertaken by senior leaders. The new senior leadership team is taking decisive action, providing a clear direction to



quicken the pace of pupils' learning and raise pupil attainment. New systems for tracking, monitoring and analysing pupil progress are in place and teachers are held to account for the progress of their pupils. Subject leaders have developed their role, planning actions for improvement and providing training and support for teachers and teaching assistants. In addition, a home-school community link worker is supporting families, which is having a positive impact on attendance rates.

The school did not participate in the 2010 Year 6 standardised assessment tests, but undertook a number of teacher assessments and tests that were moderated with other schools. These indicate that attainment in English was just above the national average. Attainment in mathematics fell below the national average for middle achieving pupils. However, the attainment of higher achievers was above the national average. Current attainment in Year 6 is close to the national average and pupils at an early stage of learning English make good progress because of the specialist support they receive. Pupils' language skills continue to be weaker on entry, but the newly appointed Early Years Foundation Stage leader has worked well with the local authority to provide specialist training for the staff in her team. A systematic programme of linking sounds and letters is now in place, which has resulted in improved outcomes for children who are able to use their talking and writing skills more confidently.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 fell in 2010, and writing has been particularly weak for three years. The new senior leadership team has been swift to address this issue by a whole-school focus on developing writing skills. Teachers are planning more writing tasks that interest pupils and enable them to extend their skills across a range of subjects. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are being used well to support their writing, providing opportunities for them to rehearse their thoughts together, prior to a formal writing activity. For example, in a Year 3 class, pupils were very enthusiastic as they looked at pictures of toys in the nursery from the Peter Pan story and were able to compare and contrast their own experiences. They used detailed and interesting imagery to describe Victorian toys. This preparation for writing has produced high-quality writing outcomes. It is also beginning to improve the presentation of pupils' written work. Progress in writing is therefore accelerating and underachievement is being addressed.

The headteacher has monitored teaching and learning and placed a clear focus on learning in lessons and addressing the issues from the previous inspection. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving and inspection evidence confirms that most teaching is good, with teachers now more effectively using questioning to develop and assess pupils' learning. Resources are well used to engage pupils in active learning. Assessments are increasingly involving pupils, enabling them to assess their own learning through easily accessible statements of what they know, can do and understand. The curriculum is being developed through a skills-based practical approach. In a Years 3 and 4 class children enjoyed a lesson on magnetism, experimenting with magnets to discover which metals they attracted. They developed interesting questions to explore together whilst playing their class

'fish game'. This enabled all levels of ability within the class to engage in and enjoy the activity.

The school has made good use of the support provided by the local authority. In particular, the support for the Early Years Foundation Stage has enabled the new leader to develop a strategic plan for her area of responsibility and, through training and support, involve her whole staff team in assessments and observations of children's learning and development. This is having a positive impact on the progress children make during their first year at school.

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

Ann Henderson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress by ensuring that:
 - more opportunities are provided for pupils to use and apply mathematical and scientific knowledge in practical situations
 - strengthening pupils' presentation and spelling skills.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - making use of assessment information to set work that challenges all groups of pupils, especially more able pupils
 - ensuring that teachers' questions are sufficiently probing to deepen pupils' understanding and assess future learning needs.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - improving the role of subject leaders in the checking of provision and progress in their areas of responsibility
 - reducing the range of tasks currently held by senior leaders
 - establishing responsibility for leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage.