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Mr Gilroy  
Headteacher  
St Patrick's Catholic Primary School  
Blue Lane East  
Walsall  
West Midlands  
WS2 8HN

Dear Mr Gilroy

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 8 June 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please thank the governors who joined me for a meeting and the pupils for helping me around the school and talking to me over lunch.

Since the last inspection there have been considerable staff changes mainly due to promotion or relocation. Three newly qualified teachers have been appointed. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has increased to 33%, almost twice the national average. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority heritages has increased to almost 50%, twice the national average. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English has risen to 25% which is well above the national average.

As a result of the inspection on 26 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:

satisfactory progress in making improvements

and

satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.



Attainment overall by the end of Year 6 is average. Recognising that when this group of pupils entered the school their levels of skills and knowledge were well below those expected for their age, this demonstrates good progress. This is due, in no small part, to the excellent start children have in the Early Years Foundation Stage of the school. Progress from the end of Reception to Year 2 stalls somewhat, so that attainment is then slightly lower than it should be. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2, with good progress noted in Years 5 and 6.

Attainment in mathematics at Key Stage 1 showed little improvement at the end of last year. However, in two lessons observed in Years 1 and 2, pupils' attainment was much closer to the age appropriate level and showed an improvement in both achievement and progress.

The quality of writing at Key Stage 2 is satisfactory, with pupils showing some improvements since the last inspection. The National Curriculum tests of 2010 showed the proportion of pupils reaching both Level 4 and Level 5 was broadly average. Currently the Year 6 cohort has 25% of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities with 10% of pupils not starting at the school at either Nursery or Year 2. These have had a negative effect on attainment, but tracking shows that in spite of this, the school may well reach the targets set for it. At the same time, inaccurate assessments made when this cohort was in Year 2 and recognised as inaccurate both by the school and by the previous inspection, gave the school expectations it could not possibly achieve. Assessment arrangements have been radically improved and they are moderated both by the school and its partners in the local authority. As a result they are now realistic and a useful tool for setting targets.

The leadership and management of the school looked widely into how to support improvements in writing. It developed strong partnerships with a local school seen to be 'outstanding'. This has seen exchanges of teachers between the schools and joint lesson observations and professional development. Good support from the local authority has resulted in lesson studies taking place with an advisory teacher, to improve teaching and learning in writing lessons. The use of termly pupil progress meetings has meant that a much closer watch is kept on pupils' progress in writing, with more responsibility and accountability taken by class teachers for such progress. The International Primary Curriculum was adopted to support cross-curricular writing. However, while all these have been in place and have been making a positive difference, it is too soon for them to have had full impact on progress for the current Year 6. Nonetheless improvement is building consistently year on year.

Improving the quality of teaching and learning was and still is a prime concern of the school. To this end it has set up, with the support of its partners, a range of activities to assist such improvement. The exchange of staff with its partner school has allowed access for staff to see to a range of good quality teaching effectively



developing classroom practice. Newly qualified teachers receive good support from the school and are clearly putting into practice a wide range of recently developed skills, so that they too are now producing good lessons. At the start of the year, the proportion of good or better lessons was 75%. However, following the promotion and relocation of two teachers, in particular, this proportion immediately fell to around 50%. The school was undeterred in its quest for improvement and this inspection confirms that, while not fully consistent, all teachers are now able to produce 'good' lessons. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is regularly good and sometimes outstanding. The same can be said for the teaching in Year 6. In the best lesson, Year 6 pupils were preparing to write about a multicultural story they were reading. Appropriate emphasis was placed on the use of high quality vocabulary. All groups of pupils were challenged because the teacher used assessment well and ensured that the lesson was carried out at a brisk and exciting pace. Many additional resources were used and pupils themselves were happy to help their friends in a very mature way. In some lessons, although questioning was clear, responses were often made only by those who knew the answers, so that a number of pupils were inadvertently overlooked. At the same time, at the start of some lessons, class assistants were not used effectively enough.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher form a strong partnership for improvement and lead the school well in evaluating its needs and putting in place a wide range of strategies for improvement. They have an effective track record in gathering support from a range of providers and good progress has been made. The key document, the school development plan, now gives a clear focus for further improvement, including those issues noted at the previous inspection. Success criteria are used so that the school might recognise more clearly how successful it has been. Named staff and governors are highlighted to show responsibility and accountability for actions taken. In spite of the loss of some middle leaders, the senior leaders are taking on additional roles until newly appointed staff join the school. Thus, although progress was interrupted, it is now back on track. The leadership of the school, at all levels, has a clearer picture of how to improve and has already earmarked additional training for other teachers who will, in time, be able to take on additional leadership roles. This illustrates that the school now has a better capacity for sustaining 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

Gavin Jones

**Additional Inspector**



## Annex

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

- Improve pupils' academic progress, particularly in mathematics at Key Stage 1 and writing at Key Stage 2.
- Raise the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that by January 2011, teaching and learning will be judged good or better in at least 75% of lessons, by:
  - making better use of assessment information to plan lessons which stretch and challenge all pupils, especially, though not exclusively, the higher attainers
  - setting high expectations for each group of pupils based on clear appraisal of what they know, understand and can already do.
- Use the findings of school self-evaluation more effectively to drive improvement by:
  - ensuring that school improvement planning is focused on the key priorities needed to move the school's overall effectiveness from 'satisfactory' to 'good'
  - establishing clear success criteria for all planned improvements and ensuring that leaders and managers at all levels regularly and rigorously review progress against these criteria.

