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14 July 2011

Mrs Claire Harrison
Headteacher
St Edmunds RC Primary School
Queens Street
Little Hulton
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Dear Mrs Harrison,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Edmunds RC Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 July 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 pupils who gave up some of their lunchtime to talk to me about the school and to the local authority officer who spoke with me on the telephone.

Since the previous inspection the school has appointed a family support worker; secured the role of the attendance officer to a full time post; and a new Chair of the Governing Body has been elected. In July 2011 two teachers will take retirement from the school.

As a result of the inspection on 3 and 4 March 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.

Results of the 2011 Key Stage 1 national assessments show performance in reading, writing and mathematics at the expected Level 2B+ has dropped from the improvement realised in 2010. However, the school has identified the reasons for this drop and has planned action to support these pupils as they move through Key Stage 2.

Pupils were not entered for the end of Key Stage 2 national tests in 2010, but the school's assessments show that 88% of this group of pupils reached the nationally expected Level 4 in English and 70% in mathematics. Progress for the current Year 6 pupils accelerated over the past year and the most recent unvalidated National Curriculum test results show that attainment in mathematics has been maintained at the expected Level 4. Although results in reading have dipped, the school has successfully improved pupils' attainment in writing. The

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proportion of pupils gaining the expected Level 4 rose from 53% to 77%; while 12% reached the higher Level 5. This continues the rise in pupils' performance in writing since the last inspection. Pupils comment on their improved confidence in writing. Lesson observations, pupils' progress information and a scrutiny of pupils' work show although the rate of pupils' progress is picking up; it is not consistent in all classes or all subjects.

This improved picture in pupils' writing is due to better learning. Staff have welcomed and appreciated the good support from the local authority. A literacy consultant has provided professional training for teachers and teaching assistants in, for example, developing writing and guided reading techniques. This has led to raised expectations of what pupils can achieve and more confident classroom practice. With the support of an external consultant the school has reviewed the curriculum. Teachers have responded with enthusiasm and planned links between subjects to appeal to pupils' interests and needs. Visits to lessons during the monitoring visit show there is potential for teaching and learning to improve further. Effective features of lessons include sharper introductions by teachers, thorough planning, well-managed behaviour, timed activities to increase pace of learning and activities linked to real-life situations. For example, pupils in Year 1 were using the recent visit to Southport as a focus for writing recounts. Senior leaders recognise that there is still some work to do to ensure consistent good learning in all classes and to enable pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning. For example, senior leaders know that the marking policy is not supporting pupils in identifying precise 'next steps' in their learning and checking this has been completed in the next piece of work; consequently they have plans in place for to improve this aspect of their work from September.

The school has successfully taken constructive steps to improve pupils' attendance. The attendance officer has worked very effectively with the local authority education welfare service to implement strategies to communicate to pupils, parents and carers the benefits of consistent regular attendance. As a result, rates of attendance have increased and rates of persistent absence have dropped. Pupils enjoy receiving certificates for good attendance and one pupil commented that by attending school he would learn more and 'get a better job'.

A number of factors have contributed to the improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage provision. A clear management structure has been established with the leader now forming part of the senior leadership team. The leader has visited other settings to gain valuable ideas on appropriate provision. As a result, the school is working hard to establish an environment in which children can enjoy activities inside and outside the classroom. Staff have received training in assessment techniques to ensure consistency in recording and checking children's progress as they move from Nursery to Reception. The children who completed the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2011 made better progress from their starting points than children in previous years.

The school values the well-targeted support the local authority provides, for instance, in receiving training from literacy and Early Years Foundation Stage consultants. The education

welfare service works closely with the school in the drive to raise attendance and is very responsive to the school's needs.

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

Eileen Mulgrew
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place 3 and 4 March 2010

- Develop pupils' literacy skills by:
 - increasing small-group work on focused writing in order to develop their confidence in producing written assignments
 - increasing the opportunities they have to connect writing with real-life situations
 - further developing guided reading.

- Ensure that the quality of pupils' learning is consistently good by:
 - providing realistic challenge in all lessons so that pupils are encouraged to reach the standards of which they are capable
 - giving pupils opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and progress.

- Improve pupils' attendance by:
 - further developing communication with parents and carers to ensure that all families see the importance of regular attendance
 - developing systems to provide pupils with positive feedback and rewards for good attendance.

- Improve provision and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - developing the learning environment both indoors and outside
 - providing more opportunities for child-initiated and independent learning
 - ensuring consistency and accuracy in the assessment of children's learning across both Nursery and Reception.