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Mr Andrew Darby  
Headteacher  
St Thomas More Catholic Primary School  
Lewis Road  
Cheltenham  
Gloucestershire  
GL51 0HZ

Dear Mr Darby

**Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Thomas More Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 5 and 6 July 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Directors of Children's Services for Gloucestershire and the Diocese of Clifton.

Yours sincerely

Michael Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Meet all requirements for ensuring children's safety with immediate effect by:
  - ensuring all necessary checks on staff are carried out and recorded
  - ensuring all required training in safeguarding is up to date
  - keeping complete records of the case histories of pupils at risk of harm
  - ensuring the governing body monitors procedures and practice more closely.
  
- Ensure the school's leaders have an accurate view of the school's provision and performance by:
  - tracking the progress of pupils accurately
  - analysing the information gained from such tracking in order to identify variations in the progress of the different groups
  - comparing the results of such analysis with other methods of evaluating teaching, to build a complete picture of its quality
  - monitoring the impact of the recent changes to the curriculum.
  
- Use the results of the analyses above to draw up detailed plans for improvement that identify what area is in need of improvement, how it is to be improved, and what impact is expected on pupils' progress as a result.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching from satisfactory to at least good and raise achievement by:
  - ensuring more able pupils are always given suitably challenging work
  - enabling lower-attaining pupils to work more effectively
  - ensuring swift action is taken by the school's leaders to rectify any inadequacies in provision.

## **Special measures: monitoring of St Thomas More Catholic Primary School**

### **Report from the third monitoring inspection on 5 and 6 July 2011**

#### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work and lessons in all years, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the School Improvement Partner, senior leaders, subject leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, groups of pupils, a group of parents and carers, and representatives from the local authority and the Diocese of Clifton.

#### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the substantive headteacher has resigned. The headteacher of a local school, who had previously been the acting headteacher at the time of the first monitoring visit, has taken over as acting headteacher again until a substantive headteacher can be appointed.

#### **Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning**

The local authority has supported staff within the Early Years Foundation Stage well to ensure assessments are accurate. Children start the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and aptitudes well below those expected for their age, particularly those for communication, language and literacy. Children make good progress and enjoy learning. They enter Key Stage 1 with attainment below average. The school has rightly recognised the need for the current Reception class to carry on with a curriculum based around Early Years Foundation Stage practice as they start Year 1.

Results from this year's end-of-key-stage assessments are encouraging. In Key Stage 1, results in writing are greatly improved and broadly average. Results in reading and mathematics are improved but still remain below average. Results at the end of Key Stage 2 are much improved from the 2009 results. The school did not enter pupils for the Key Stage 2 tests in 2010. Attainment in both English and mathematics is average and progress is satisfactory. These results show that the improved teaching and learning in key classes is having a marked impact upon the rate at which pupils progress and how well they achieve.

In other years, pupils make at least satisfactory progress. The school tracks the progress of pupils against their target levels and holds class teachers to account. Observation of pupils during the inspection shows that they are involved with their work. They take responsibility for their learning and work well independently. Pupils commented that they particularly like the work around the themes. This was supported by parents and carers, who said when they had previously asked what their children had done in school, they often were told 'not much'; now pupils come

home excited about their work. Pupils are keen to complete their weekly homework and one parent said he enjoyed helping with this work as he found it interesting.

Pastoral meetings are key in identifying how well pupils are achieving as well as any particular learning needs individuals may require. This ensures the school can effectively track both the academic and social and emotional progress of pupils. This close analysis shows that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress at a similar rate to their peers.

### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Pupils' personal development and well-being continue to be good. Pupils get on well with each other and they have a good understanding of the different types of bullying. They are confident that any incidents are quickly and effectively dealt with and they all can identify at least one adult with whom they feel secure in discussing any problems. The work within the themes has increased pupils' cultural awareness as they often consider a variety of different cultures locally, across Britain and around the world. They often consider a variety of moral issues, for example the need for sustainability and the ethical sourcing of raw materials during the manufacture of products. The work around being an entrepreneur supported pupils' understanding of how to run a business and their economic awareness.

Attendance has continues to improve and is average, with only a very small proportion of pupils identified as being persistently absent and having too much time off school.

### **The effectiveness of provision**

The thematic approach to the curriculum has been a major success. Pupils enjoy practising their literacy skills in their topic work and using the theme from the topic in English lessons. Numeracy skills are also being incorporated more across the curriculum and pupils feel that this gives these greater relevance. Teaching is at least satisfactory, with more good or better teaching evident. Key strengths are good relationships, good opportunities for pupils to work independently and good marking of pupils' work to identify how they can improve. Teachers consistently plan appropriate lesson objectives, which incorporate clear success criteria to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities.

The quality of support for pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable is good. The school works well with families to help support individuals and has set aside time for these pupils to work on improving their social and emotional skills. The termly pastoral meetings between class teachers and a senior leader are effective in identifying any additional pastoral or academic support needed and monitoring the impact of previous interventions. The pastoral support worker is effective in supporting families with children who have low levels of attendance.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement – good

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The senior leadership team have been successful in maintaining the momentum of improvement since the time of the previous visit and during the uncertainties of the changes of headteacher within the school. They feel empowered and have a good understanding of how they can build upon this success. They monitor the quality of teaching and evaluate the impact of the revised curriculum. They have formulated clear improvement plans to build upon the success to date. The leadership role has been extended so that now the subject leadership is distributed across staff. In mathematics, good work by the subject leader and the local authority has ensured the school has a better understanding of gaps in pupils' knowledge, identified how to bring about improvements and formulated an action plan. Science and religious education are subject areas where staff take greater responsibility to bring about improvements. There are clear improvement plans in place and the school is extending its areas of concern beyond those identified in the last inspection.

Previously, leaders lacked expertise and were unsure of what to do. Updating the management structure of the school has not been a priority and, as such, it does not presently make maximum use of the increased confidence and competence of staff to bring about and embed change. The return of the acting headteacher has been very well received by staff, who respond well to his excellent support and challenge. Relationships with parents and carers are good. The frequent meetings for parents and carers to discuss issues are well received. As parents and carers said, they are able to influence school practice; for example staff are now readily available to discuss pupils' needs before school

Members of the governing body have a very good understanding of what needs to be done and hold staff to account. The Chair is very active in school and her expertise and challenge are very evident when working with the local authority at project board meetings. There are well-formulated plans to work with the local authority and the diocese to appoint a permanent headteacher, while still considering a wide variety of other options. The governing body has agreed a plan with the local authority to manage and reduce the deficit budget over a three-year period.

Safeguarding procedures are strong, with very good support given to pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- meet all requirements for ensuring children's safety – outstanding
- ensure the school's leaders have an accurate view of the school's provision and performance – good

- use the results of the school's self-evaluation to draw up detailed plans for improvement – good

### **External support**

The local authority continues to provide good support for the school. It coordinates and facilitates support well and evaluates these actions through its frequent project board meetings. The School Improvement Partner is highly effective in supporting leaders at all levels, including developing their skills with lesson observations and scrutiny of work. Good support for the assessments at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has ensured these are accurate. Subject advisers have supported subject leaders develop both their subject-specific skills and their management roles.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Update the management structure and leadership roles and responsibilities, at all levels, to:
  - support the long term ambition of the school
  - embed a strong capacity to carry on improving.