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14 July 2011

Mrs J Williams
Headteacher
Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School, Church
Bradshaw Row
Church
Accrington
Lancashire
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Dear Mrs Williams,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Sacred Heart Roman Catholic 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.

Since the last inspection there has been a number of long-term staff absences through sickness and maternity leave.

As a result of the inspection on 4 and 5 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 inadequate progress in making improvements and inadequate progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2011 has declined significantly since the last validated data of 2010. This is partly related to the lower ability of the 2011 cohort, but the school's own analyses show that the proportions of pupils making the expected progress since Key Stage 1 in English and mathematics are very low. Although over half of the current Year 6 pupils have joined the school since the end of Year 2, rates of progress were similar for those who had spent four years in Key Stage 2 in the school and for those who joined later. This represents inadequate achievement for these pupils. Very few pupils are reaching the higher levels in either English or mathematics.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are improving steadily. For the current Year 2 they are broadly in line with age related levels in mathematics but remain below average in reading and writing. The proportion gaining the higher Level 3 in mathematics is now above average but it remains low for reading and writing.

July 2011



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

In lessons the pace of learning is often slow. Pupils display little enthusiasm for their learning and much low-level inattention is evident. Many pupils find it difficult to work independently without direct adult supervision and do not achieve enough in the time available.

The school provides a supportive environment, especially for pupils whose circumstances deem them vulnerable. There has been some notable success in reducing persistent absence and, although it remains low, attendance is improving. The reduction in exclusions is evidence of improving behaviour management. Data relating to incidents of misbehaviour are collated and used to highlight particular problems or issues which can then be followed up. Pupils who met with the inspector reported that most pupils behave well most of the time but a small minority have problems. Teachers' management of behaviour is effective and they implement the school's policy consistently. Pupils perceive that lunchtime incidents are sometimes dealt with less fairly. The school has tackled this by making increasing use of senior leaders and teaching assistants to supervise at lunch time.

In the lessons observed, weaknesses in teaching identified at the previous inspection persist and lessons proceed slowly. Planning often includes a description of what pupils will do rather than identifying the specific targets which each group of pupils are required to learn. As a result, some pupils' progress is not as good as it might be. Overlong teacher-led sessions do not meet the needs of the full range of abilities. There is too little pupil involvement so that pupils are expected to be passive listeners and, as a result, become bored and restless. There is often little to inspire the pupils and, although many do settle to the tasks set, those working independently are not productive enough and are easily distracted. Time is sometimes lost as a result of organisational matters, including room moves for different groupings. Teachers' expectations are too low. Although teachers often set work that is intended to be matched to the needs of pupils of different abilities, there is not always enough challenge for the more-able pupils. Few pupils know the levels they are working at, although many could recall at least a few of their specific targets, especially in writing. Much teaching is mundane but some activities are better contextualised and do engage more interest. Marking is carried out regularly and there is some appropriate use of 'green' comments praising work and 'red' comments with advice for improvement.

Pupils spoke enthusiastically about some of their subjects including information and communication technology (ICT) and science. The very recently established ICT suite is a valuable resource that is appreciated and is beginning to be well used, but it is too early to assess the impact on pupils' attainment.

School leaders have sought to address the issues for improvement identified at the previous inspection but fundamental weaknesses remain. Attendance and behaviour management have improved and the installation of an ICT suite has addressed a resource need. However, weaknesses in teaching and learning have not been addressed effectively. The pace of change to raise achievement has been too slow and lacks sufficient rigour. Staff absence has been a factor that has hindered the school's improvement work but the marked decline in outcomes shows that the school's own capacity to improve is weak. Leaders readily

acknowledge the significance of the poor results of the 2011 national tests. School assessment data had suggested that these pupils would obtain much better results, which calls into question the accuracy of the school's own assessments. Governors have recently agreed to request additional support from the local authority monitoring and intervention team, recognising that external help is needed.

The local authority has provided appropriate support through the work of advisers and consultants. Most recently the school has been provided with support in assessing the quality of teaching.

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

Ruth James
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 4 and 5 March 2010:

- Ensure consistency in the progress of the more-able pupils by:
 - making more use of assessment information to track pupils' progress from year-to-year
 - planning work that focuses on individual needs and is sufficiently challenging
 - consistently involving pupils more in their own learning so that they know how to improve.

- Increase pupils' responsibility for their own actions especially when unsupervised and impress on them the impact of their behaviour on others.

- Raise the profile of ICT by:
 - improving access to resources
 - improving the use of resources
 - implementing an action plan that focuses on raising attainment.

- Improve attendance to bring it consistently in line with the national average by impressing even more on parents the importance of regular attendance.