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Mrs K Bannon – Executive Headteacher
Mrs J Donaldson – Associate Headteacher
St Dominic Roman Catholic Primary School
Southampton Road
London NW5 4JS

Dear Mrs Bannon and Mrs Donaldson

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Dominic Catholic Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 3rd November 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Discussions with staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, the pupils and the representative from the local authority were also very helpful in evaluating the progress the school has made. Please pass on my thanks to all concerned for the time they gave to talk to me and for the welcome I received.

Since the June 2010 inspection the headteacher has resigned. The local authority and Westminster Diocese have brokered a partnership arrangement. The headteacher of a local outstanding primary school is acting as the executive headteacher of both schools. An associate headteacher has been appointed for the period of the partnership. Five teachers have left the school and new temporary and permanent appointments have been made to replace them. A new Chair of the Governing Body has recently been elected.

As a result of the inspection on 15 June 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 remains broadly average in both English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2. Standards have improved recently so that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected Level 4 by the time they leave school is now above average. Progress remains uneven across the school but here too there are signs of improvement and this is closely linked to the quality of teaching which is improving



Last year the vast majority of pupils made accelerated progress in Year 6. Leaders are determined to ensure that progress becomes more even across all year groups. In well taught lessons, work is well matched to different abilities to challenge all pupils, including the most able, however this is not consistent in all lessons. Pupils themselves say that sometimes work is too easy and this is confirmed through the scrutiny of pupils' books and lesson observations. More secure assessment is not yet feeding into activities that are matched precisely enough to pupils' needs in all lessons. In many lessons teachers provide logical links in learning for pupils to understand each stage and to develop their information and communication technology, mathematics and writing skills across the curriculum. Regular opportunities for writing were observed with clear relevance to science when younger pupils used an autumn walk as a stimulus for using ambitious describing words. Older pupils have produced high-quality writing based on a history topic. The presentation of pupils' written work has improved as a result of teachers' consistently high expectations. In another lesson, older pupils developed their information and communication technology skills to record school meals data in charts and graphs. The use of partnered talk is embedded across the school and provides good opportunities for pupils to explain their thinking and rehearse their answers with fellow pupils. Progress in developing pupils' reading skills is good. Daily opportunities for pupils to read in groups, with the support of their teachers, are effective in securing this improved progress. In one guided reading lesson the class teacher was using well-targeted questions to deepen pupils' understanding of the text and to support their skills of inference and prediction.

The school tracks the progress of pupils carefully, based on more accurate teacher assessment which has been thoroughly moderated. This tracking is used more effectively to hold teachers to account for the progress pupils make. There are ambitious targets in place for all pupils. Marking and feedback to pupils have also improved and there are now more opportunities for pupils to respond to marking. However, this is not yet consistent across all year groups or subjects. There are plans to set appropriate curriculum targets for all pupils but this is at an early stage.

The school has undergone a considerable amount of change in a short time. The leadership of the school, including key roles in governance, has changed and some appointments are very recent. There is an air of enthusiasm in the school and staff members are fully committed to securing the rapid improvement needed. Under the new leadership the pace of change has accelerated. The school evaluates itself well and all are clear that progress needs to improve for pupils through better quality teaching. There are ambitious development plans in place with appropriate priorities. However, not all staff have ownership of these plans, and guidance about how to measure success is not sharp enough. The leadership of the school has secured the confidence of staff and all can see positive change including in the consistency of pupils' good behaviour. The newly appointed Chair of the Governing Body has clear plans to develop the role of governors in holding the school to account and in improving the school's capacity to improve. Thorough safeguarding records are systematically recorded.

Monitoring of teaching is regular and accurate. Teachers are clear about what they need to improve through the feedback they receive following observations of their lessons. However, development goals set for teachers following observations are not always swiftly followed through to subsequent observations. Teachers have confidence now that they will be supported to improve their teaching, including by working with outstanding teachers from the partner school and through good professional development opportunities.

Attendance is improving and the school is on track to meet its targets this year. This is as a result of more careful tracking of individual pupils and the higher profile of the importance of good attendance in the school. A range of rewards and incentives encourage good attendance. Good partnership work with the local authority supports individual families. The use of fixed penalties demonstrates the school's low tolerance of poor attendance.

Although the school is beginning to develop links with schools nationally and internationally, it has rightly focused its efforts on developing a truly cohesive school community and building on strong links locally and within the parish.

The local authority's support has been firmly focused on supporting the partnership arrangements which are having a positive impact on the rate of change at the school and its capacity to improve. It has also provided specialist support in leadership, literacy and numeracy from learning consultants and advisers.

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

Michelle Winter
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that the vast majority is good or better by:
 - ensuring all teachers use assessment information to plan lessons that provide appropriate challenge to different ability groups, in particular the more able pupils
 - providing pupils with consistently good quality written and oral feedback, linked to learning targets, to support them in making further improvements.
- Raise standards in Key Stages 1 and 2 by ensuring that regular opportunities are provided across the curriculum for all pupils to develop the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology.
- Build on the effective strategies currently in place to improve pupils' attendance so that it is at least average against national benchmarks for primary schools.
- Build on the good work in community cohesion at the school and local level by developing strong national and global links.