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Mrs Helen Peters
Holy Rosary Catholic Primary School
Hickman Avenue
Wolverhampton
WV1 2BS

Dear Mrs Peters

Special measures monitoring inspection of Holy Rosary Catholic Primary School

Following my visit with Sandra Ewing Additional Inspector to your school on 23 – 24 January 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2012. 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published 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 Director of Children's Services for Wolverhampton and The Director of Education for the Archdiocese of Birmingham Education Service.

Yours sincerely

Michael Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2012

- Accelerate pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills
 - improving the teaching of letters and sounds (phonics)
 - improving the precision of pupils' spelling and punctuation, and the accuracy of their grammar
 - ensuring that pupils generate a good amount of writing and have enough time to complete their work
 - making certain that pupils' basic computation skills are secure.

- Boost the progress of disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and pupils from Irish Traveller heritages by:
 - enhancing teachers' understanding of how to address the needs of these groups of pupils and by improving their expectations of pupils' capabilities
 - ensuring that support sessions are taught efficiently and meet pupils' individual needs
 - checking the quality of additional support robustly to ensure it has a positive impact on pupils' learning.

- Eradicate inadequate teaching and increase the proportion of good or better teaching by:
 - making sure that assessment information is used to provide work that is always carefully matched to pupils' ability levels
 - rigorously monitoring learning in lessons including when pupils are working by themselves
 - ensuring that marking and the use of academic targets help pupils understand exactly how to improve their work and by making sure that pupils always respond to this guidance.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, including governance, by:
 - developing the skills of middle leaders so that they have a greater impact on improving achievement in their areas of responsibility
 - ensuring the curriculum is planned to develop pupils' basic skills
 - making certain that assessment information is accurate and that the progress of those who join or leave the school part-way through their primary education is checked thoroughly.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 23-24 January 2013

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, including eight lessons, sessions to support pupils' reading and an overview of books to see opportunities for pupils to write extended pieces of work. They heard pupils read, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, a representative of the local authority and groups of pupils, including those who are new to the school. Additional members of the Governing Body, the headteacher of the supporting partner school, Edward the Elder, and a representative of the Archdiocese of Birmingham Education Service attended the formal feedback at the end of the inspection.

Context

Since the previous visit a member of staff has left and there have been changes to the roles and responsibilities of the deputy headteacher and to the subject leader for literacy. There is an acting deputy headteacher in post and the headteacher has taken on responsibility for coordinating the support for disabled pupils and those who have special education needs. At the time of the inspection, the normal running of the school was disrupted by substantial snow falls.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Systems to record and analyse progress information are improving, as is the accuracy of the assessments made by staff. This includes arrangements for assessing the progress of pupils who come from other schools and join part-way through their primary education. Progress information shows that pupils are making improved progress in most years but there are still areas of underperformance which are of concern and the systems are too new to show trends over time. Early indications show that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are likely to be higher in the 2013 Key Stage 2 tests than those achieved in 2012, but lower for Key Stage 1 assessments.

In lessons, progress is variable and ranges from good to inadequate. Pupils have responded well to the extra support for their reading through a daily session which allows them to make connections between different letters and the sound which they can make. Results show that they are progressing well in some areas, all be it from a low starting point. Pupils have more opportunities to write longer pieces of work. In some classes, pupils always write longer pieces every week and they are making better progress with their written work, both in its accuracy with spelling and grammar and in its variety and complexity of language. However, these

opportunities are inconsistent and, consequently, pupils in some year groups do not progress as well as others.

Calculation skills are improving. The new approach has started to help pupils have a better understanding of calculations, but it is still in its very early days and as such has not been effective over a sustained period.

The school has been supported by the local authority to complete a review of all pupils who were identified as needing additional support because they were disabled or have special education needs. They now match the additional support for these pupils and have introduced systems to evaluate how effective this support is. The progress made by pupils from different backgrounds is checked and the school can identify pupils who have made good progress with their reading and writing.

The quality of teaching

Teaching has improved. There is less inadequate teaching and more that is judged good. Teaching assistants have become better at supporting pupils in class, in delivering the daily session to help pupils with their reading and writing, and when pupils are following intervention programmes.

Pupils are more engaged and interested in their lessons. When this is most effective, there is a sense of enjoyment and excitement and learning is good. However, in other lessons pupils are not sufficiently motivated and, as a result, the progress they make is limited. As teachers become more confident, they are giving pupils more demanding and challenging work. Pupils are able to make connections for themselves which enable them to understand their work rather than just completing examples or copying. In these lessons, teachers question pupils well and there is a limited use of worksheets. However, when teaching is less than good, lessons do not engage pupils who complete work with limited enthusiasm or commitment.

The use of assessment information to plan lessons has improved. In the best lessons, teachers make sure all pupils in a class are set work which enables them to progress. However, in some lessons pupils are not given work which is hard enough for the most able.

Marking is variable. It is better in pupils' writing books than their mathematics books. In writing books, teachers' comments give pupils advice on how they can improve, and then opportunities for them to respond to these comments before they go onto their next work. In mathematics, too often it just identifies what is right or wrong and rarely gives an area for pupils to develop further. Marking in other subjects is variable, ranging from detailed to very sparse and ineffective.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are generally well behaved around school, although poor behaviour by a small number of older pupils during lunchtime has meant an increase in the number of pupils who have received a fixed-term exclusion. This is usually because of over-aggressive behaviour. Pupils generally are polite and courteous and show positive attitudes to their work. However, when lessons do not excite and motivate pupils their behaviour is weaker, with pupils not paying enough attention to their work.

Attendance continues to rise as the proportion of pupils who have a lot of time off school reduces. The school has benefited from good support from the local authority welfare officer who has been effective in raising attendance from groups who traditionally have lower attendance.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

A reduction in the number of senior and middle leaders has brought about a slowing to the pace of improvement. Staff have responded well to their new roles but there is now a smaller team to support the improvements in teaching by demonstrating good practice. The school, governors and the local authority rightly recognise that the leadership team needs strengthening, including the appointment of a full-time special needs coordinator, if it is not going to fall behind the programme of planned improvements. Leaders have an accurate evaluation of the quality of teaching and also of the impact of subject leaders in raising achievement. Senior leaders have observed teaching and, where possible, model good practice. The overall quality of teaching has improved and more is now judged to be good, however inadequate teaching, while reduced, remains.

Subject leaders have introduced new ways of teaching reading and to help pupils improve their calculation skills. They have checked on how well teachers and teaching assistants are teaching these groups and, in some cases, modelled good practice. However, they have not identified what outcomes there should be in order for them to judge their work effective, although early indications are that they are being successful.

Governance has improved. Governors are more challenging and better at holding the school to account for its actions. This challenge is recorded in the minutes of their meetings. They have improved the information available about how well pupils are progressing and use this to identify if any groups are underachieving. As more information becomes available, governors will be able to judge how effective the support for pupils eligible for additional government funds (pupil premium) and disabled pupils and those who have special education needs has been in reducing the achievement gap between these pupils and pupils overall. Governors have made

sure procedures are in place and being used to check how well staff are performing and to set targets by which staff can be judged in the future.

Safeguarding procedures meet current requirements.

External support

The local authority's statement of action continues to give a sound framework for further improvement, although the school is likely to miss some of the checkpoints from within the plan. While, at this time, this does not indicate that the school is significantly falling behind the schedule for it to be removed from special measures within a reasonable time, further slippage will raise serious concerns. The headteacher and staff from the partner school have supported the school and recognise the need for it to become more self-sufficient. Increasingly, the school is identifying other schools and agencies for support. The school improvement officer, who is also a local authority adviser, works closely and effectively to challenge and support the school. The local authority continues to systematically evaluate the quality of teaching, and the progress made by the school since being placed in special measures. These are reported to the task group.