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Mrs Ann Lombardi  
Headteacher  
The Giffard Catholic Primary School  
Hordern Close  
Hordern Road  
Wolverhampton  
WV6 0HR

Dear Mrs Lombardi

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection to The Giffard Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 21 May 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, five governors and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also had a telephone conversation with the Chair of the Governing Body. The school development plan and other documents related to the school's areas for improvement were evaluated. I made short visits to each classroom and had the opportunity to talk to pupils during this time and while having lunch.

### **Context**

The school is due to convert to an academy on 1 July 2013. This will be as part of a Multi Academy Company in partnership with three other primary schools and one

secondary school. A new Vice Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed since the time of the last inspection.

Since Easter, the seconded deputy headteacher has focused on improving the quality of teaching across the school and a part-time teacher has taken over her teaching commitments in Year 2. The secondment will finish at the end of this school year. To date, nobody has been appointed to the substantive post.

## **Main findings**

School leaders are improving the quality of day-to-day teaching. There is now more good teaching but the school's records show that there continues to be some that requires improvement.

Teachers have made good use of a range of training opportunities and they are using these to help to improve their practice. The deputy headteacher has also demonstrated aspects of good teaching in lessons which other teachers have been able to then use in their own classrooms. There have been some positive improvements to the quality of marking to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve. However, marking is not consistently good. When this is the case, teachers' comments are not explicit enough about how pupils can make corrections or improvements, and pupils often continue to make the same mistakes.

Pupils' achievement is also beginning to improve. The school's records show that almost all pupils in the school are making the progress expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics. Some pupils in each year are making quicker progress, particularly in Year 6, but this not the case for all and so needs to improve. For example, the most able pupils in Year 5 are making average rather than better than average progress in mathematics. School leaders have a good awareness of how well pupils are achieving because of the regular checks they make on teaching and the information they gather about each pupils' progress. Leaders do not, however, carry out regular checks to make sure that pupils, when taught by teaching assistants, are being taught well enough.

As headteacher, you have made sure that the targets set for pupils are more challenging. Senior leaders have worked well together to create an appropriate school development plan that tackles the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Governors are using this to gather information on how quickly pupils are making progress and how effective the school's work is in other areas. The regular reports to governors from leaders are helpful, but not all of these reports are sufficiently evaluative. It is imperative that the school makes sure that the current pace of change and sense of urgency for improvement is not stalled because of a gap in the senior leadership structure. The appointment of a deputy headteacher, or equivalent, to support you in maintaining this rate of progress is an urgent priority.

The school's leaders and other staff have begun to take action to tackle pupils' stubbornly below-average levels of attendance. For example, as a result of more regular contact with parents of pupils who often miss school, these pupils are coming to school much more frequently. Updates and information about attendance in newsletters, sending text messages to parents the first day their child is absent from school and not authorising holiday requests during term time are all beginning to make a positive difference.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- tackle the inconsistencies that continue in the quality of teaching and the marking of pupils' work
- check that pupils receive good enough teaching when they are working with teaching assistants out of the classroom
- appoint a deputy headteacher, or equivalent, with the necessary skills and experience to enable the school to continue to improve.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next inspection.

### **External support**

The local authority's good quality support has helped school leaders to make improvements to the quality of teaching and other aspects of the school's work. This has included helping teachers to make sure that their assessments of pupils' work in the earlier years of school are accurate. The local authority has also brokered links for senior leaders to work with and visit local successful schools.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Wolverhampton and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**