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5 July 2013

Mrs Bernadette Shiels  
Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic Primary School  
Stand Park Avenue  
Netherton  
Bottle  
Merseyside  
L30 3SA

Dear Mrs Shiels

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to your school, on 4 July 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, to report 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 April 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher, members of the governing body, a group of pupils from Year 6, and representatives of the local authority and the Archdiocese of Liverpool, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement action plan and examined a range of other documentation, including the minutes of governing body meetings, written feedback on lessons that you have observed, a draft version of the revised marking policy, data on pupils' progress and attainment, and reports on the support provided by the local authority.

### **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection, you have returned to lead the school, after a period of illness, and the acting headteacher has re-assumed his role as deputy head. The

chair of governors has tendered her resignation, with effect from September, and you are about to appoint a new nursery teacher for the next academic year.

## **Main findings**

Despite your disappointment with the inspection judgement, you and your colleagues are determined to tackle the weaknesses in the school, so that it can once again become good.

The children to whom I spoke reported that, since the inspection, they have seen an improvement in the quality of marking. Whereas, in the past, comments on their work might have been limited to a line, they are now more extensive and useful. They are also given more opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing and to draft and re-draft their work. They feel more confident to ask for help from their teachers and are enthusiastic about the way that some teachers are endeavouring to make lessons more interesting. You are making clear progress in tackling the areas for improvement in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This includes ensuring that regular use is made of the outdoor areas, which are being further developed through the provision of new and attractive equipment.

Although improvements are being made, they are not sufficiently coordinated. Your action plan does not focus sharply on the specific areas for improvement identified in the inspection report. It does not include precise figures to show how much improvement you expect to make over a particular period of time. It does not give a clear indication of when actions are to start and finish and what effect they are expected to have in the short, medium and long term. In some cases, actions and outcomes are confused with each other and there is a lack of clarity about when and how the school is to become good.

Following an independent review, the governing body has produced an action plan which focuses on ensuring that its members have the skills to interpret data and to be more rigorous in holding the school to account. Some training has been provided to support this. The intention is to re-constitute the governing body and to increase the number of meetings held each term. At present, however, the governors rely too heavily on you and are still not taking a sufficiently active part in the work of the school. They did not make a direct contribution to developing the action plan, despite being given the opportunity to do so, and they do not have a sense of urgency about moving the school forward.

Since the inspection, you have conducted a number of lesson observations, using a new format for providing feedback to staff. The evaluations are clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching and include useful suggestions on how lessons could be made better. However, they do not focus consistently on the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report and give too little attention to the amount of progress that groups and individuals make during a lesson.

On the basis of this evidence, my judgement is that senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not focused sharply on bringing about rapid improvement.

Leaders should take immediate action to:

- amend the action plan so that it:
  - focuses explicitly on the specific areas for improvement identified in the inspection report
  - extends beyond one year and includes clearly defined targets and timescales for ensuring that the school is good
  - gives a clear indication of the actions to be taken to achieve those targets
  - identifies specific milestones for monitoring the rate of improvement, so that any necessary adjustments can be made in a timely way
  
- work with the local authority to identify schools that are good or better, in order to establish links with them and to learn from their best practice
  
- work with the local authority and the Archdiocese to strengthen the governing body, so that it takes a far more active role in the leadership of the school.

I will be returning to the school in October 2013 to check on progress and offer support if necessary.

### **External support**

The local authority is providing additional, centrally-funded support through its school improvement protocols. So far, this has included advice on the production of the school and governors' action plans, discussions on future support for English and mathematics and helpful advice and support on the Early Years Foundation Stage.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Sefton, the Diocesan Director of Schools and the lead inspector.

Yours sincerely

Aelwyn Pugh

**Her Majesty's Inspector**