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Mr J Murray  
Headteacher  
St Francis Catholic Primary School  
Mill Road  
Shelfield  
Walsall  
West Midlands  
WS4 1RH

Dear Mr Murray

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of St Francis Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 26 November 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 2013.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, representatives from the governing body and of the local authority. Short visits were made to classes to look at pupils' work. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan were evaluated. Your checks on the quality of teaching were also examined.

### **Context**

There have been no significant changes in staff since the last inspection. All vacancies on the governing body have been filled. The local authority has worked with the school to produce the action plan and is brokering further support.

## **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

There is not enough momentum in bringing about much-needed change. Some staff do not recognise the need to improve. The local authority has not been successful in securing appropriate support for you. Governors are committed to making improvements, but are frustrated that they do not have the skills they need to challenge you.

Your records of lesson observations carried out since the last inspection show you currently judge teaching to be good in most classes. Your information about pupils' progress and the work in their books indicates this is not the case. Some pupils still have work that is too easy or too hard for them. Some of the work completed since the last inspection required little effort from pupils, such as when they spend too much time in lessons colouring pictures or filling in worksheets. You have made clear to teachers how you want them to plan lessons and mark pupils' work. Nevertheless, your recent checks show not all teachers, including some who are in the senior leadership team, are following your expectations. You have not followed up on these concerns quickly enough, so improvement has been too slow.

You have worked with the local authority to write a new plan for improvement, which sets out actions and expected timescales to improve the weaknesses identified at the inspection in September. This plan is too complicated. It does not give you, governors or the local authority measurable criteria to judge whether improvements are happening. Actions do not show clearly how you will support teachers to improve the quality of their teaching or how this will improve pupils' achievement. A number of actions are repeated in different sections, so you and governors do not have a clear overview of what is happening and whether it is working. The plan sets out milestones for how good you expect the quality of teaching to be at the end of each term. These are based on your over-generous view of what teaching is like at present. This means they are not realistic and so the school has already failed to achieve the first one.

Governors fully accept the weight of responsibility for the school's failings and are strongly committed to improving their skills as quickly as possible. Those spoken to during the inspection demonstrated intuition for what 'good' looks like and were able to ask challenging questions when prompted. They are frustrated that the review of governance and subsequent training process are not scheduled to commence until December. They justifiably feel too much time has been wasted. You and governors have discussed the findings of the last inspection with parents. Many parents are keen to be involved in the school. During the inspection, parents working with their children in a mathematics workshop said they value this kind of opportunity. You have not made the most of such occasions to keep parents informed or actively seek their views about improvements that are happening.

Initial attempts made by the local authority to identify a partner school to support St Francis have proved unsuccessful. An alternative school has been identified and the local authority is in the process of formalising arrangements. This delay has hindered progress still further. The local authority's statement of action outlines general actions that will be taken to support the school, how quickly it expects improvements to be made and an expectation that parents will be kept informed of improvements. As such it meets basic requirements. However, it would benefit from including more detail about what is expected from any partner school and indicating how it will support the school to communicate more effectively with parents.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose

The school's action plan is not fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

Two newly qualified teachers joined the school shortly before the school became subject to special measures. The school and local authority must ensure these teachers receive high-quality support and supervision appropriate to this career stage.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Walsall and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Hayes  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**