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4 December 2013

Mr Jon Davis  
Executive Headteacher  
St Gregory's Catholic Primary School  
Grange Road  
Northampton  
NN3 2AX

Dear Mr Davis

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of St Gregory's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit with Susan Lewis, Additional Inspector, to your school on 2–3 December 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2012. The full list of the areas for improvement 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 be appointed in any year group from April 2014. They must be supervised by a proven good teacher and a nominated governor should keep a careful check on their progress.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Northampton Local Authority and the Episcopal Vicar of Education for Northampton Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Tim Bristow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2012**

- Accelerate progress and raise attainment, particularly in mathematics, improve the quality of teaching and ensure that:
  - staff have high expectations of pupils, particularly the most able
  - teachers use accurate information about pupils' learning to plan precisely for all groups of pupils, so that work is demanding and well matched to pupils' ages and abilities
  - all adults are well briefed and deployed during lessons in order to maximise pupils' learning
  - lessons proceed at a brisk pace so that all pupils are kept engaged throughout
  - teachers monitor and assess pupils' progress carefully throughout lessons, to check that they are able to get on with the work set and to clear up any misunderstandings
  - marking of pupils' work consistently shows pupils clearly what they need to do to improve it
  - pupils have good opportunities to develop their skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) across all subjects
  - staff are all skilled in teaching letters and sounds (phonics), in managing pupils' behaviour and using ICT to enable pupils to learn more effectively.
  
- Develop the capacity for staff with leadership responsibilities to contribute to school improvement by:
  - carrying out a review of their roles and responsibilities
  - providing training to enable them to monitor and evaluate teaching, use information about pupils' learning to evaluate their achievement, contribute to school improvement planning and holding staff to account for their success in promoting pupils' achievement.
  
- Increase the effectiveness of governance by ensuring that:
  - the governing body has a full complement of well-trained governors, who are skilled in using information about how well pupils learn to hold the school to account
  - governors fulfil all of their duties, particularly in relation to the use of the pupil premium funding and the approval of pay increases, based on how well staff meet the targets set for them.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 2–3 December 2013**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, governors, pupils, members of the senior leadership team, and representatives from the local authority and diocese.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection the local authority issued the school with a warning notice. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have left the school. They have been replaced by an executive headteacher and an assistant headteacher.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Overall, in reading, writing and mathematics, pupils are making better progress than at the time of the last monitoring inspection and standards are rising. In Years 2 and 5, pupils are making good progress because of good teaching. In other year groups, the rate of progress is slower because the teaching is not yet good enough. Pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding make slower progress than others. This is because the funding to support them is not being used effectively to provide activities designed to raise standards. The progress made by disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is accelerating.

More children than is typical enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skill development in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy that is lower than expected. They do not get a good enough start in the Reception and Year 1 classes to catch up. There is not enough emphasis in the Reception classes on developing speaking and listening skills, particularly for children who speak English as an additional language. In mathematics in Year 1, pupils have gaps in their learning that the teaching does not address well enough, and this hinders their progress.

### **The quality of teaching**

The proportion of good teaching is growing. Since September 2013, teaching has improved at a faster rate than before. Teachers demonstrate that they are committed to improving their teaching. Nevertheless, there remains too much teaching that requires improvement and some that is inadequate.

Marking is of better quality than at the last monitoring inspection. All the teachers are conforming to the recently implemented marking policy. Work is regularly praised and teachers are giving advice on the next steps that pupils should take to improve their work. Often the advice is not as helpful as it could be because it does

not specifically show what pupils need to improve. In addition, pupils rarely respond to the advice given, and teachers do not check that they have.

All the teachers are now trying to embed school expectations of good practice in their lessons. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are also rising. For example, in all lessons, teachers make sure that pupils understand what they are going to do, what they should have learned by the end of the lesson and why. This helps pupils to know how well they are doing. This demonstrates a consistent approach to strengthening teaching that has been lacking in the past.

Where teaching is weak, the work that teachers prepare for pupils of different abilities is sometimes too hard or too easy and so pupils do not learn as much as they could. For example, the more-able pupils do not receive work that challenges them to think. This is because some teachers still struggle to use their knowledge of what pupils already know and can do when planning lessons, to make sure work is pitched at the correct level.

Recent training has enabled some teachers to improve their teaching of reading. A few others who have received this training still do not teach reading well enough. Teaching assistants are benefiting from training, and the support for groups such as disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is strengthening.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Around the school nearly all pupils are polite and respectful to each other. Their attitude to learning in lessons is dependent on the quality of teaching. In an English lesson in Year 6 and a religious education lesson in Year 5 where the teaching was good, pupils demonstrated an outstanding attitude to learning. They cooperated extremely well in presenting thoughtful answers to well-constructed questions. Where teaching in lessons is weak, some pupils in each group do not work hard enough, and in the poorest cases they take part in silly behaviour.

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

Decisive leadership by the executive headteacher, ably supported by the assistant headteacher, has resulted in necessary rapid improvements so the school is now back on track and making reasonable progress. Crucially, leadership at all levels has been strengthened. Less experienced leaders are now benefiting from structured leadership support. They report that they have a much better understanding of what they should be achieving. The work they do is beginning to have the required impact on school improvement.

The executive headteacher has presented to the community a clear vision for the future success of the school. This is raising morale; teachers are all working hard and with greater effect to improve their practice.

Firm foundations for future school improvement have been laid. Systems recently introduced to manage the performance of teachers and to check the progress of pupils have given school leaders a clear understanding of where teaching and learning most need improving. Teachers are now gaining a much better understanding of the progress that pupils in their classes should make, and are being held to account to ensure that this progress is made.

Governance has strengthened considerably since the previous monitoring visit. One reason for this is the resolute and uncompromising leadership of the chair of governors. He now has the backing of a capable local school committee of governors. Governors show they are determined that leadership, teaching and learning will strengthen rapidly and have all the necessary checks in place to ensure that this is happening. The planned move to academy status in the New Year is not distracting them from these priorities, as demonstrated by their decisive action to strengthen senior leadership.

### **External support**

The governors have benefited from good support and training from the local authority to improve their effectiveness. The local authority was also instrumental in the successful recruitment of new senior leaders. The diocese has helped the school by taking the responsibility for the move to academy status, thus enabling the governors and leaders to concentrate on school improvement.