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7 March 2014

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 Valerie Palmer, Additional Inspector, to your school on 5 and 6 March 2014, 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 fourth 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 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.

The school may appoint a maximum of two newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. A member of the senior leadership team should be responsible for their induction and development and should report their progress regularly to the governing body.

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 fourth monitoring inspection on 5-6 March 2014**

### **Evidence**

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

### **Context**

An assistant headteacher took up her post in January this year. One teacher has left the school.

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

Most pupils in Years 5 and 6 are making the expected progress and the proportion that do better than this is growing. This means that their underachievement as a result of inadequate teaching in the past is being overcome and gaps are narrowing compared with national results in reading, writing and mathematics. There is better progress than in the past in other years. For example, in Years 1 and 2 pupils known to be eligible for free school meals are making good progress. There are groups whose progress remain too slow. In Years 1 to 4 the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and more-able pupils is too slow. In addition, in Years 3 and 4 the progress of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who speak English as an additional language is also too slow.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage it is difficult to measure the progress that half of the children have made because the assessment procedures and records of their learning kept in learning logs have not been fit for purpose.

Pupils in Key Stage 1 are making faster progress when learning to read because teachers and teaching assistants are now better at teaching phonics (recognising the sounds that letters make). This is because of the training they have received since the last monitoring inspection.

### **The quality of teaching**

School leaders have been successful in continuing to reduce the proportion of teaching that is inadequate, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 4. Regardless of the ability of the teachers, all of them are working very hard to try to strengthen their teaching and the impact is positive.

Pupils in Years 5 and 6 benefit from teaching in reading, writing and mathematics that is good and sometimes outstanding. One reason why it is so effective is because teachers have a detailed understanding of the skills and abilities of individual pupils and use this information effectively. The learning in these lessons stretches those who are more able and gives the necessary help to those who struggle with learning new ideas.

The recently introduced marking policy is being adhered to in nearly all classes and is having a positive impact on pupils who respond well to the advice and comments made by teachers. Where it is working most effectively, time is set aside for pupils to revisit their work and make improvements based on the teachers' guidance.

In other years, particularly Years 3 and 4, teachers are not as proficient at doing this. The work that pupils receive does not challenge them at the right level. When this happens, some pupils really struggle with work that is too hard and others report how they find the work too easy and would like it to be harder.

Teaching assistants are being better deployed in lessons and were observed making an effective contribution for the groups of pupils that they were working with. In Years 3 and 4, pupils who are working unaided do not make good progress because the teacher does not oversee their work well enough. This means that pupils who find work too hard struggle unaided for too long.

In mathematics in Years 3 and 4, it is apparent that teachers are unclear how best to teach some topics, such as measurements. Activities and explanations are not helpful enough to ensure that pupils learn what is planned.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the outside area that children should be using regularly appears to have had little recent use.

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

Behaviour around the school continues to be good. Initiatives such as the new marking policy introduced this term are also strengthening pupils' attitudes to learning as they respond conscientiously to the advice and guidance offered by teachers. In Years 3 and 4 some pupils lose interest in their work. This occurs when they are left unaided to complete tasks that they find too hard.

Teachers promoted pupils' spiritual development very effectively. For example, during the monitoring inspection pupils were learning about Ash Wednesday and were observed thoughtfully and reverently writing their messages and prayers.

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

The school now benefits from an effective senior leadership team. Responsibilities have been clarified and evaluation of strengths and weaknesses is accurate and provides the priorities for strengthening teaching and learning that are the necessary ones. Leaders have continued to root out inadequate practice and to deal with it robustly.

The senior leadership team has been established since the last monitoring inspection. While they are demonstrating their effectiveness, they continue to learn where weaknesses exist. This means that many initiatives to resolve weaknesses are too new to have had an impact on achievement. For example, the procedures for tracking pupils' progress are now very helpful and accurate. Leaders have identified that groups of pupils are making progress that is too slow. They have used pupil premium funding and other resources to provide additional help for different groups of pupils. However, these actions are too new to have had an impact and also because they are new the quality of some of these initiatives varies too much. Leaders are aware of this weakness and are taking the appropriate steps to improve quality and measure success.

School leaders are aware that the quality of teaching in some subjects, such as science and geography, is too variable. In some classes pupils have had very few science lessons and the work they produce represents a low standard of development, but in others they have more chance to do experiments. Steps are being taken to strengthen these subjects. School leaders and governors have invested considerably in equipment for the teaching of information and communication technology. At the time of this monitoring inspection the school is waiting for the delivery of this equipment.

Governance continues to improve. The school now benefits from an established and skilled governor committee that regularly checks the impact of leadership on the pupils' education. Committee minutes show that governors have a detailed understanding of teaching and achievement and ask pertinent questions of the leadership team to check that they are taking the right steps to continue school improvement.

### **External support**

The local authority has given the school effective help by providing teachers with the opportunity to attend the improving-teaching programme that is being led by another local school. They are also now giving the necessary advice to the school leaders on how best to strengthen the Early Years Foundation Stage. The recent monitoring visit that was carried out in February this year was challenging and accurate. The diocese continues to take responsibility for the move to academy status. This is important as it leaves the governors and leaders free to concentrate on school improvement.