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3 December 2014

Mrs Sue Horncastle  
Headteacher  
Our Lady of Good Help Catholic Primary School  
South Drive  
Wavertree  
Liverpool  
Merseyside  
L15 8JL

Dear Mrs Horncastle

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Our Lady of Good Help Catholic Primary School, Liverpool**

Following my visit to your school on 2 December 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. 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 July 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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:

- review the action plan to ensure that:
  - strategies are clear and specifically focussed on improvements in classroom practice
  - key dates are signposted to ensure that slippage in meeting targets does not occur
  - strategies to develop middle leadership are clearly linked to improving the quality of classroom teaching
  - approaches to improve reading throughout the school are added to the plan

- targets to improve the quality of performance management are clear and manageable
  - improve the quality of reading across the school by:
    - ensuring that the reading policy is applied consistently across all classes in the school
    - improving the quality and range of books available for pupils in the school library
    - making the regular use of dictionaries and thesauruses part of everyday lessons in order to develop spelling and grammar
  - continue to improve the learning environment, including the outdoor provision in the Reception class, in order that it is more conducive to supporting learning well.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with yourself and your assistant headteacher, three representatives of the governing body and a group of pupils. A telephone conversation was held with a local authority officer to discuss the action being taken to improve provision in the school and the level of support being provided. The school's development plan was also evaluated. In addition, a learning walk with you focussed on the quality of reading provision and the resources available to support reading across the school.

## **Context**

Teaching and learning responsibilities have been restructured with a majority of teachers now teaching in different age groups than previously. A temporary teacher is covering maternity leave in Year 6 until the end of term. Subjects are now being taught discretely with individual subject responsibilities being identified. The governing body is due to be re-constituted in the near future.

## **Main findings**

Some improvement has occurred in attainment in writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2. However, reading is weak with most pupils in Year 6 behind where they should be for their age. These older pupils are still not accessing books as free readers. Overall, a clear gender gap exists with boys generally doing better than girls. However, it is a small number of girls who attain the higher levels. Boys are particularly poor at reading. Inconsistencies across classes continue to affect progress.

The action plan does address most of the weaknesses identified during the recent inspection but does not always identify in sufficient detail how classroom practice is

to be directly improved. Systems for monitoring provision and assessing pupils' progress have now been put in place. It is too early to fully judge consistent impact. Pupils' progress is now being tracked more rigorously. As a result, underachieving pupils are being identified more quickly and consistently enabling intervention to take place. The plan focuses strongly on management processes but less on direct improvement in the classroom. Milestones, against which stages in the improvement process can be cross-checked, need to be more clearly identified. Some initial links with partner schools to observe good practice have been established and more are planned for the immediate future.

During the learning walk we looked specifically at how reading is being developed across the school. We agreed that inconsistencies remain across classes. Although, on the whole, books are changed regularly, few pupils are using their home reading records to provide feedback on their understanding of texts or to identify new vocabulary etc. Library resources are particularly poor and do not currently encourage a love of reading.

The learning environment, including the outdoor play area in the Reception class, is often cluttered, can be dull and displays do not always stimulate or support learning.

Pupils interviewed have begun to notice some changes, notably improved provision in sport and in computer access and hardware. They are aware that marking is more rigorous but, as yet, they do not always make the best use of opportunities to improve or correct their work. They consider behaviour around the school to be good although low level disruption still occurs in some classes.

Middle leadership is at an early stage of development and currently remains more focussed on establishing procedures and systems rather than the development of sound classroom practice. The development of good subject knowledge or the acquisition of better resources is not yet evident.

School governance is due to be re-constituted before the end of term. Governors understand why the school requires improvement. Several have become more proactive in their duties. They are aware of the changes being initiated and the ongoing need to accelerate improvements in the classroom. Governors take an active role in regular challenge board meetings which monitor the progress being made towards improving the school.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The school was 'light touch' previously but is now being monitored by the local authority on a regular basis. The recent inspection has also generated more

intensive support from mathematics, English and Early Years consultants. The school is utilising the planning provided by the local authority to ensure that the new curriculum requirements for English and mathematics are being met. In addition, support for the senior management team has been arranged from a National Leader in Education. There is a firm commitment to continue monitoring and support until the school is making the progress necessary to become a good school.

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

Yours sincerely

Leszek Iwaskow

**Her Majesty's Inspector**