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29 April 2015

Yvonne Devereux  
Headteacher  
St Paul's Catholic Primary School  
Park Lane  
Cheshunt  
EN7 6LR

Dear Ms Devereux

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Paul's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 28 April 2015, 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 February 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

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 ensure that:

- all key areas for improvement are addressed thoroughly in the school improvement plan
- all success criteria are measurable, aspirational and achievable.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, four members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated and you took me on a tour of the school.

## **Main findings**

The school's leaders and governors were somewhat surprised and disappointed that the school was again judged to require improvement at its recent inspection. However, you have not dwelt on this disappointment and have responded quickly to the issues raised by inspectors.

The senior leadership team wrote the school improvement plan collaboratively. You sought advice from the local authority improvement partner and discussed the developing plan with the governing body. As a result, the plan is a robust document with many good features.

The inclusion of the school's vision statement at the beginning of the plan makes clear your aim for the school to provide pupils with an outstanding education. The school's priorities are clear, and most of the key actions from the recent inspection are addressed fully. The plan includes a good range of suitable actions, and specific people are identified as having responsibility for ensuring that they are carried out. The school improvement plan includes milestones to be met at appropriate intervals. The role of governors is clear in the plan.

However, there are aspects of the school improvement plan that need to be improved. Although the plan addresses most of the key issues from the inspection in February 2015, it is not clear how two aspects of raising standards in mathematics will be tackled (that is, ensuring that 'the most able pupils are sufficiently challenged to reach the higher level of attainment' and that 'expectations of what children can achieve in Reception in developing number skills are high enough to prepare them well for Year 1').

The plan includes success criteria to measure the impact of planned actions and many of these are in the form of highly aspirational numerical targets. Whilst it is laudable that you are determined to aim high, it is also crucial that your targets are realistic. In some instances, success criteria are not measurable making it difficult to decide whether or not the criterion has been met.

You have sensibly focused on improving standards of teaching and learning and a range of actions have already been carried out. I was able to see evidence of developing good practice when you took me on a tour of the school but I agree with your assessment that practice is not yet consistent across the school. You and the staff have reviewed the school's marking policy and updated practice accordingly. You told me that marking has improved as a result of this change. I was able to see improvement in marking when I sampled pupils' exercise books but, again, I agree with you that good practice is not yet consistently good.

Governors are fully aware that, until recently, they have not had the balance right between supporting the school and providing appropriate challenge. They know that this has prevented them from being effective enough in their role as 'critical friend'.

Governors have recently attended a range of appropriate training courses and they say that this is helping them to feel more confident in their roles and better able to hold the school's leaders to account. The minutes of recent governing body meetings show that governors are now asking more challenging questions about the information that you provide them with.

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

### **External support**

The local authority is providing the school with appropriate support and challenge and this is valued by the school. The designated improvement partner visits the school regularly and knows its strengths and weaknesses well. The local authority's teaching and learning advisors are providing useful support to the school. As the school has now been judged to require improvement at its two most recent inspections, it has now been identified by the local authority as a school causing concern. The personal involvement of their Strategic Lead for primary education signals the local authority's commitment to ensuring that the school is good or better by its next inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Diocese of Westminster and the Director of Children's Services for Hertfordshire County Council.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Varney  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

cc. Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board  
cc. Local authority  
cc. Archdiocese – for Catholic schools