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30 April 2015

Miss Lisa McGarrity  
Interim Headteacher  
The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School  
Kingsland Gardens  
Kingsthorpe  
Northampton  
NN2 7BH

Dear Miss McGarrity

**Special measures monitoring inspection of The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit with Kerrise James, Additional Inspector, to your school on 28–29 April 2015, 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 January 2014. 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 newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. The school may accommodate no more than one newly qualified teacher, at any time before the next monitoring inspection. The newly qualified teacher may work in any key stage.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the Diocesan Board of Education for the Diocese of Northampton, and the Director of Children's Services for Northamptonshire local authority.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Spencer  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2014**

- Eliminate inadequate teaching and make it consistently good by ensuring that:
  - pupils understand where their learning is taking them
  - lesson activities interest pupils and inspire them to do their best
  - teachers use questioning effectively to make pupils think hard.
  
- Raise achievement in Key Stage 2 by making sure that:
  - work in mathematics is not too hard but demanding enough for pupils to make rapid progress particularly the more-able pupils
  - pupils have plenty of opportunities to write at length in different subjects
  - all subjects are taught in sufficient depth to develop pupils' key skills.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management so that:
  - newly qualified teachers have all the support they need to improve teaching rapidly
  - teaching assistants have the skills to make a difference when supporting pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium
  - key stage phase leaders have a good understanding of the progress of pupils in their areas and are held to account for the quality of teaching and pupils' performance
  - the roles of senior leaders are clear to all staff and lines of communication are well known
  - all parents have confidence in the school
  - the new governing body strengthens its capacity to hold the school to account, especially in making sure there is sufficient relevant expertise on the 'school committee'.

Ofsted has made recommendations on actions for governance to the authority responsible for the school. This will include an external review of governance.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 28–29 April 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, and met with senior and middle leaders, the Chair and two other members of the Interim Executive Board (IEB), a representative of the diocese, and a National Leader of Education (NLE), who is currently supporting the school. Inspectors spoke formally to two groups of pupils, and informally with parents and carers on the playground, to gather their views. Inspectors observed pupils in each class while they were learning. Some of these observations were undertaken jointly with senior members of staff. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including leaders' documents to monitor the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement data, work in pupils' books, and safeguarding documentation, including the single central register of staff suitability checks. The inspection focused on all of the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit, the interim headteacher has left the school. A new interim headteacher has been appointed. At the time of the monitoring visit, interviews were taking place for a permanent headteacher. The deputy headteacher and the head of teaching and learning are currently on maternity and medical leave respectively. Additional external support for leadership has been organised by the interim executive board to cover the temporary absence of these leaders. Since the last monitoring visit, three teachers have left the school and one newly qualified teacher has been appointed. Two long-term temporary teachers have been appointed on a permanent basis.

The St Bonaventure Trust continues to work with the interim executive board to agree on a suitable improvement partner, to enable the school to become part of an academy.

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

There is strong evidence that pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics, in each key stage, is accelerating. Consequently, pupils' attainment is rising. This is because the quality of teaching is improving. Work in pupils' books indicates that teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have risen. Different groups of pupils, including pupils supported through the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and pupils who speak English as an additional language, have responded positively to this.

In the early years, a higher proportion of children are on track to reach the expected standards in literacy and mathematics than in previous years. In Year 1, a higher

proportion of pupils are on track to reach the expected standard in phonics (the sounds that letters make) than in previous years. This includes a significant increase in the proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium who are on track to reach the expected standard. In Year 2, more pupils are on track to reach the expected and higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics than in 2014. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are also making stronger progress. Pupils' progress is weakest in Year 3. However, there are very early signs that changes in teaching arrangements are beginning to improve standards in this year group.

The quality of pupils' writing is improving. Teachers ensure that pupils now have more frequent opportunities to practise their writing skills, including more frequent opportunities to write at length in different subjects. Staff have ensured that the profile of writing has been raised in the school. For example, the highest standards of writing in each class are showcased on a 'Star Writers' display. Pupils report that they value this and feel proud if their work is displayed. Due to previous underachievement, some gaps remain between the quality of writing for different groups of pupils. This is most noticeable in Year 5, where the standard of girls' writing is much higher than that of the boys. Work in pupils' books indicates that boys are beginning to close the gap. However, there remains much work to do.

At the time of the last monitoring visit, pupils demonstrated weaknesses in their mental calculation skills in mathematics, particularly when solving problems. Many pupils in Key Stage 2 were unable to recall multiplication facts accurately and rapidly, and pupils in Year 6 had gaps in their understanding of time. There have been significant improvements in each of these areas since the last monitoring visit. Pupils were observed using a range of appropriate strategies to solve mental calculation problems, and their confidence in doing so has soared. This is because teachers plan more frequent, and better quality, opportunities for pupils to practise these skills. For example, pupils explained that they were determined to join the '144 Club' – a privilege reserved for those pupils able to recite all 144 multiplication facts within a period of four minutes. A whole-school calculation policy, agreed by staff and driven by the mathematics leader, has underpinned a consistency of staff expectations about what calculation skills and methods pupils should learn. However, at the time of the monitoring visit, details of the policy had not been shared with parents and carers. This will be checked at the time of the next monitoring visit.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching is continuing to improve in all key stages and is underpinning pupils' improved progress. This is because leaders have made regular checks on the quality of teaching and provided staff with clear guidance about how to improve their work. Teachers are now pitching work to match pupils' different abilities much more effectively and consistently. This is helping to ensure that pupils are interested and engaged in learning and feel appropriately challenged. However, teachers and teaching assistants are still not using questions as effectively as they could do to

stretch the thinking of the most-able pupils in lessons. The impact of teachers' questioning will be checked at the time of the next monitoring visit.

Teaching assistants continue to develop their skills and provide improved support for pupils. For example, many have benefited from additional training from the mathematics leader to help improve their confidence and skills when teaching mathematics. This has helped them to provide better support for pupils in lessons and when working with targeted pupils in small groups. Consequently, pupils' progress in mathematics is accelerating. Teaching assistants are also choosing to intervene in pupils' learning in a more timely manner than previously. For example, they now allow pupils space and time to fully show what they can do before they choose to intervene.

The quality of teaching in the early years has improved greatly since the last monitoring visit. Teachers are using assessment much more effectively to check the impact of their work on children's progress and to identify the next steps of learning that children need to take. This is helping children to make better progress in their learning. Children's learning journals (books that contain examples of their work) contain a much broader range of evidence about their progress in different areas of learning.

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

As at the time of the last monitoring visit, inspectors have no concerns about pupils' behaviour and safety at the school. Pupils were observed behaving calmly and safely in different parts of the school. Discussions with pupils, and with parents and carers, indicate that this is a typical picture.

Most pupils demonstrate a positive attitude to learning and a determination to succeed. They are also thoughtful and sensitive towards the needs of others, and have an age-appropriate understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

Pupils' attendance remains broadly in line with the national average but is improving. Pupils' punctuality in coming to school has improved significantly. This is largely down to the very good work of the school's family support worker and attendance officer. They have worked with leaders to provide better support for families and also to introduce a programme of trigger points for letters to, and meetings with, parents and carers to tackle persistent lateness to school. Consequently, the number of late arrivals to school has halved since the same period last year.

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

Unavoidable absences of members of the leadership team, and the process of switching interim headteachers have slowed the momentum of improvement slightly in recent weeks. However, the interim executive board has worked effectively to

make arrangements to minimise the impact of the changes. For example, the new interim headteacher is receiving support from external, experienced leaders of education to help oversee the development of a recently appointed newly qualified teacher, and of the early years. Arrangements for the leadership of English have also changed since the last monitoring visit, due to a forthcoming maternity leave. This is being covered by internal members of staff, with suitable subject expertise and experience. They have made a promising start in beginning to review and refine the school's action plan for English. The impact of their work will be checked at the time of the next monitoring visit.

The new interim headteacher joined the school very recently. However, parents report that she has made a strong start and is approachable and responsive.

Initial arrangements to support the school's newly qualified teacher, who is currently in the final term of her newly qualified year, are suitable. Leaders are checking the quality of her work carefully and have set appropriate improvement targets for her.

Discussions with parents and carers indicate that most are happy with the progress the school is making. However, some comment that they would like to receive more information from the interim executive board about the school's progress against its key priorities. They also comment that they are unclear about the additional leadership support being provided to the acting headteacher during the absences of other members of the senior leadership team. The interim executive board has agreed to improve the flow of information to parents and carers about the school's progress. The impact of this will be checked at the time of the next monitoring visit.

The interim executive board is working effectively to improve the school, and the stability of teaching staff, during a challenging period of time. For example, there are now fewer teachers employed on temporary contracts than at the time of the last monitoring visit, and the quality of teaching is improving. A suitable improvement plan is steering the strategic development of the school. Interim executive board meetings and monitoring visits are ensuring that school leaders are effectively challenged and held to account for their work. Preparations for the establishment of a 'school committee' (equivalent to a local governing body to specifically oversee the work of the school) are at an advanced stage. The impact of the school committee will be checked at the time of the next monitoring visit.

Members of the interim executive board are in agreement that it would be advantageous for the school to become part of an academy, through the St Bonaventure Trust. However, preparations for the transition to academy status are not moving quickly enough. The diocese and interim executive board understand that a decision about the selection of an improvement partner is urgently required in order to keep plans on track for the school to convert to an academy. Their progress in doing so will be evaluated at the time of the next monitoring visit.

Pupils supported through the pupil premium are making accelerated progress at the school. However, the interim executive board, and those previously responsible for school governance have failed to ensure that all available funds allocated for pupil premium pupils have been spent. This has resulted in carry forwards of pupil premium funding to the next financial year. Current plans to support this group of pupils continue to show a projected underspend. This is not good enough. Plans for pupil premium spending will be checked at the time of the next monitoring visit, together with the impact the funding is making on pupils' progress.

The school's leader for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs has a detailed overview of the learning needs of the pupils who require additional help and support. However, her understanding of school assessment data is limited and further training is required to support the development of her skills in this area.

School leaders have correctly identified that urgent work is required to finalise details of the school's system to assess and track the progress of pupils from September 2015 onwards, and to ensure that all staff are familiar with the arrangements. The impact of the school's performance management systems will be checked at the time of the next monitoring visit.

No safeguarding concerns arose during this monitoring visit. The school's single central register of staff suitability checks continues to be well maintained and up to date.

### **External support**

The local authority continues to provide effective support to the school. Until the very recent changes in leadership and the absences of several leaders, the local authority scaled back the level of support it provided to the school, as agreed, to see how well leaders could perform. However, some effectively targeted support was still provided, including a comprehensive review of the school's work, which resulted in a useful report for leaders and the interim executive board. The local authority has continued to attend and make valuable contributions to meetings of the interim executive board.

A representative from the diocese has conducted a review of the school's work, focusing on leadership and religious education. School leaders found the monitoring report helpful in supporting their work. Representatives from the diocese are members of the interim executive board, and continue to contribute ideas to help decide the future direction of the school.

Support from a National Leader of Education, a senior member of staff from her school, and an additional experienced school leader, to cover the absences of senior leaders, has only begun very recently. The impact of this support will be reviewed at the time of the next monitoring visit.