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3 July 2015

Mrs Anna Majcher  
Principal  
Our Lady's Catholic Primary School  
Oxford Road  
Cowley  
Oxford  
OX4 2LF

Dear Mrs Majcher

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Our Lady's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 2 July 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and members of the academy company are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The academy should take further action to:

- refine the academy development plan so it is clear how success will be measured against the outcomes achieved by pupils
- improve the quality of teaching by ensuring teachers have regular opportunities to develop their skills and expertise
- ensure members of the academy company offer high quality support to leaders.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you, two members of the governing body, including the Chair, and two representatives of the Dominic Barberi multi-academy company, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the academy's action plan. In addition, I scrutinised other academy documentation, including records of leaders' monitoring activities. I joined you on a tour of the academy and visited every class.

## **Context**

There have been no changes to staffing since the inspection. Five class teachers, including the Key Stage 1 leader, are leaving at the end of term. The early years leader is on planned absence and a newly qualified teacher is currently leading this department. Five new teachers will start in September 2015, including three who are newly qualified. The deputy principal will relinquish her teaching responsibility in September 2015 to provide additional leadership time.

## **Main findings**

You and the deputy principal are working methodically and purposefully to bring about necessary improvements. However, you acknowledge that the pace of improvement is hampered by the instability of staffing, difficulties in recruiting experienced staff and the limited support available from the academy company. At the end of the last academic year, but prior to the previous inspection, a number of experienced staff, including the acting principal, left. There continues to be a significant turnover of staff. Many staff, including several teachers are new and many are relatively inexperienced. Despite this, you have begun to stabilise the academy and establish clearer expectations.

Leaders have adapted the academy's action plan, outlining the key actions to be taken and by when. As well as addressing the key areas requiring improvement, the plan also incorporates actions to support the implementation of the new national curriculum. However, the targets you have set for improving pupils' progress do not feature well enough in the plan as the key measure for success. As a result, it is unclear how you will evaluate the impact of the actions you are taking. The plan needs to be strengthened to include specific references to pupils' progress and attainment, to help keep a sharp focus on how well pupils are learning and achieving. This will help you and your governors set a clear path to ensure the academy improves more rapidly.

As you have begun to address the areas requiring improvement, you have unearthed other shortcomings. Mathematics, for example, was not taught regularly enough. You have redesigned class timetables to make sure pupils have more opportunities to practice their mental calculation skills in daily mathematics sessions. In addition,

you have purchased new resources, including practical aids to support conceptual understanding. Pupils are now making better progress in mathematics.

Work to improve the quality of teaching is at an early stage. However, you have stated your expectations clearly, tackling the most important issues first. Leaders are making regular checks and providing helpful feedback to teachers. Staff meetings ensure there are regular discussions about raising standards of teaching and learning. You have reviewed the academy's marking policy. There is greater emphasis on providing pupils with more helpful feedback. Teachers set next steps so pupils have a clearer idea of how to improve their efforts. The learning environment has been revitalised. Displays are of a high standard and support pupils' learning well. More pupils are achieving the level expected for their age and more pupils are achieving higher levels. However, broader training opportunities for teachers to improve their skills and expertise are limited. This, alongside frequent changes of staff, means that progress to improve the quality of teaching is slow.

The teaching of reading is improving. You have refurbished the academy library and purchased appealing reading material. Pupils now have personalised bookmarks with appropriate reading targets. They talk positively about the range of reading materials that are available and delight in the opportunity to take books home. Consequently, more pupils are reading regularly, more widely and with greater enjoyment.

You and the deputy principal have begun to halt the decline and make astute changes that are aiding improvement. However, you acknowledge that the contribution of other leaders to improving the academy is at a very early stage. Despite this, there are some compelling examples of improvement. For example, the temporary early years leader has produced a detailed and insightful action plan. Work to distribute leadership more widely and build capacity within the academy, is hindered by some staff inexperience and the temporary staffing arrangements.

Governors are providing helpful support. They have a clear understanding of what the academy needs to do to improve and are determined to hone their skills and play their part. Recently they have completed helpful training in how to monitor the academy's effectiveness. Governors have participated in several useful learning walks and are gathering more information for themselves first hand. As a result, the partnership between governors and academy leaders is strengthening.

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

### **External support**

The multi academy company does not oversee standards in the academy rigorously enough. Recently, members of the academy company have begun to look more closely at standards in the academy. However, the academy company has not

intensified support for leaders following the recent inspection and wider support is limited. The academy company has released some funding to ensure the site is safe for pupils and work to complete external fencing is nearly complete. The principal has commissioned several external consultants to offer well-judged support.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Oxfordshire, the Diocesan Education Service and the Director of the Dominic Barberi Multi-Academy Company.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**