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Miss Sarah Peacock  
Headteacher  
Our Lady of Good Help Catholic Primary School  
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Dear Miss Peacock

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

Following my visit to your school on 20 June 2017, 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 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in July 2016, 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- sharpen the school improvement plan so that it becomes a useful and strategic document for governors to:
- monitor if improvements are happening quickly enough
- hold leaders to account for their improvement work
- take decisive action to improve attendance so that it becomes closer to the national average
- monitor carefully the implementation of new plans to improve learning in subjects other than English and mathematics to make sure that:

- teaching in these subjects is consistently effective
- pupils make at least the progress that is expected of them across the curriculum.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, leaders of mathematics, science and the coordinator for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SENCo). I met with the chair of the governing body and two foundation governors and also met with a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. You joined me in short visits to lessons to see the improvements made to teaching and learning in mathematics. Leaders of English showed me evidence of the improvements made to writing from a sample of pupils' work in books. I also reviewed a range of documentation and evaluated the school improvement plan.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, you have been appointed as acting headteacher and will continue in post as substantive headteacher from September. A new leader of English has been appointed who will join the school at the start of the new school year, together with a new leader of early years.

## **Main findings**

After a period of instability, you have secured permanent leaders and teaching staff successfully from September. You are now able to plan for the future and implement your vision for pupils at Our Lady of Good Help to benefit from a good standard of education. You have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. You have made a significant start in tackling all the areas for improvement from the last inspection. Further work is planned to make sure that learning is fun and that pupils experience a rich and interesting curriculum.

Your priority is for teaching to be consistently effective, so that pupils' progress improves rapidly across the curriculum, not just in English and mathematics. You have supported teachers in their professional development. You have helped them to set learning objectives and to define success criteria, so that pupils know what they are expected to learn in lessons. As a result, pupils have a better understanding of the skills they need to practise to ensure that they are successful.

Your new leader of mathematics, appointed around the time of the previous inspection, has transformed teaching and learning in mathematics. All staff use the new calculation policy to make sure that they teach written calculation methods in the same way and use correct mathematical language. As a result, this is less confusing for pupils as they move from one year group to another or change

teachers. Teachers consistently use the new plans in mathematics with activities to develop pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills. Pupils were seen sharing their answers to questions in lessons and were confident in explaining alternative or better ways to reach the same answer. The new focus on developing problem-solving skills makes sure that all pupils have to think deeper about their work. Mastery of mathematics is developing well and the most able are now challenged more appropriately in their work. However, the least able pupils need more support to develop their understanding. Some teachers are not yet confident in providing pupils with a range of counting equipment and other resources to support pupils' learning.

Your continued focus on consistency has already tackled some of the weaknesses in writing seen at the last inspection. Your temporary leader of English, with support from the English leader from your partner school, has brought about improvements to handwriting, spelling, punctuation and grammar. Most key stage 2 pupils write neatly using the cursive script and understand spelling rules to help them to spell words correctly. However, these are merely the building blocks to improving progress in writing. The real transformation comes through your plans to scrap the previous overuse of worksheets and to increase opportunities for writing across all subjects. You have developed a new curriculum, to be introduced from September, which links together pupils' learning in history, geography and other subjects in a more interesting and engaging way. Your science leader has produced new plans for teaching science, to provide pupils with more opportunities to think scientifically, to investigate and to find things out for themselves.

You now know exactly which pupils need extra help because they have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Your SENCo, who is currently working towards the national SENCo award, now has a register of these pupils in place. Support plans show individual pupils' barriers to learning and the additional support they need. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully in English and in mathematics and the SENCo quickly identifies where additional help may be needed. Teachers are well supported to help them to meet the needs of these pupils. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their classmates. Regular reviews with parents and pupils are used well to plan additional support such as through external agencies if needed.

Your middle leaders know it is their responsibility to ensure good progress for all pupils. They monitor progress carefully by using a range of evidence. This includes pupils' work in books, checks on teaching and learning in lessons and reviews of teachers' assessments. This work is embedded in English and mathematics, but is still to be developed in other areas as the new curriculum is introduced. Assessment is planned to provide a robust approach to monitoring pupils' progress across the curriculum. Leaders work well with teachers, supporting them as they develop their skills. This is welcomed by teachers who are enthusiastic to improve their practice and are committed to your vision to improve the school.

You have brought about a transformational change in the early years learning environment since this area was developed in September. You have improved the indoor classroom significantly, and provided opportunities for children to extend their learning outside. As a result, children are developing creatively and increasing their independence. Children were seen developing good communication skills through chatting excitedly together as they worked in their shop, describing their favourite flavours of ice cream. Children's early writing successes are celebrated through the work on display in the classroom. Children's writing, communication and language development are improving, so that they are better prepared to get off to a good start in Year 1.

Attendance is currently a key barrier to the school being judged as a good school. At the time of the last inspection, attendance was well below the national average and in the bottom 10% of maintained schools in the country. This trend of low attendance is indicated to continue, as attendance for 2016/17 shows little sign of improvement. Urgent action is needed to explore and quickly introduce new ways to tackle this weakness. You also need to make sure that all parents understand the need for their children to attend school regularly to prevent them from falling behind.

The school improvement plan is not a useful document to help leaders, including governors, to monitor progress with key actions or to hold staff to account. There are no quantifiable milestones, so it is unclear if improvements are happening quickly enough. Nor does the plan state who is responsible for delivering key actions and by when, or who is responsible for monitoring and how often this will take place. Attendance, a key barrier to the school's improvement, is missing from the improvement priorities. You are aware of these shortcomings and, together with support from the local authority, you plan to develop a more useful and strategic document. Governors are knowledgeable about the school and are suitably skilled to enable them to hold leaders to account. They are currently reviewing the frequency of their monitoring. They are proposing a move away from termly meetings to a more focused approach to track improvements with the new and improved school improvement plan.

### **External support**

You have drawn on a range of highly effective support to help the school to become a good school. Support from your partner school, St Paschal Baylon Catholic Primary School, and the local authority have been instrumental in ensuring that teachers' assessments are accurate. This means that you and governors can trust the assessment information that is provided. Further support is planned as the new leader of English takes up post in September.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the archdiocese of Liverpool, the regional schools commissioner and the director

of children's services for Liverpool. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Denah Jones  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**