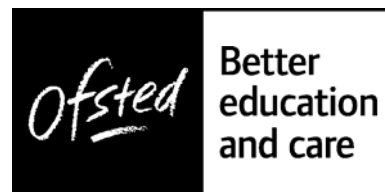


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Mr Des O'Shea  
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1 February 2006

Dear Mr O'Shea

## **SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ST PATRICK'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with Andrew Watters HMI and Chris Field, Additional Inspector, to your school on 11 and 12 January 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in June 2005.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors met with the headteacher and nominated staff, the chair of governors, and representatives from the local authority (LA). Inspectors observed teaching in all year groups and scrutinised a range of documents as well as pupils' work.

### **Context**

Following the inspection of June 2005 the headteacher and deputy headteacher resigned. The current interim headteacher is employed by the LA as a consultant headteacher and is expected to remain in post until July 2006. Governors are in the process of recruiting a substantive headteacher. Two full time teachers joined the school in September. The school management team has been restructured and all of the teaching staff have taken on new

leadership roles or areas of responsibility. A part time teacher joined the school in January 2006.

### **Achievement and standards**

In the Foundation Stage standards are generally in line with what is expected for the children's ages and most children currently make at least satisfactory progress from their different starting points. Some children have made very good progress since they joined the school in September 2005.

At the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 the 2005 national test results improved on the previous year. In Year 2 all of the pupils achieved the expected Level 2 or above in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportions of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 were 31%, 23% and 58%, respectively. These results are generally above average and exceptionally high in mathematics. In Year 6 94% of the pupils in English and science and 85% in mathematics achieved the expected Level 4. Attainment was broadly average and value added measures between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 indicate that the pupils made satisfactory progress.

In lessons in Key Stages 1 and 2 the pupils' progress was satisfactory overall but variable. There are shortcomings in the way the pupils' progress is assessed and in the subsequent planning for the next steps in learning. However, where teaching was good the pupils made better progress because they were challenged and worked at a good pace.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in June 2004:

- raise standards in the Foundation Stage—satisfactory progress
- raise standards in Key Stage 2—satisfactory progress.

### **Personal development and well-being**

Between 2004 and 2005 some improvement has been made in the school's attendance rate although at 93.7% it remains below the national figure of 94.6%. On the first day of the inspection the attendance rate was 89.9% which is very low. The school's outdated administrative system cannot support the use of computerised registers to monitor the pupils' attendance. Since January 2006, the school has usefully made direct contact with parents on the first day of their children's absence and follows up lateness by letter. Urgent issues are followed up quickly with relevant agencies.

The behaviour of pupils around the building and in lessons was good. A calm, orderly atmosphere prevails throughout the school and the pupils are courteous and polite. On the first day of the inspection two pupils provided inspectors with a set of helpful instructions to guide them around the school. The pupils had written these instructions themselves. Good behaviour is recognised, encouraged and celebrated by adults. The headteacher displays

written congratulatory messages for pupils around the school building when good behaviour has been seen.

### **Quality of provision**

The new leadership team is rightly giving priority to improving teaching and this is beginning to have a positive impact, as reflected in the rising standards. The quality of teaching and learning ranges from good to inadequate and is satisfactory overall. Relationships between adults and pupils are good with all classes enjoying a positive climate for learning.

Where teaching is consistently good pupils are engaged in productive and purposeful learning that results in good gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. A particularly positive feature is the use of talking in pairs, an approach that is helping pupils to extend their vocabulary, develop confidence orally and subsequently improve their writing. Although inconsistent, there was some good practice at the end of lessons to reinforce new knowledge and involve pupils in reviewing their personal achievements.

Despite the school's concerted efforts, some of the weaknesses in teaching identified by the last inspection are still present. The planning of lessons is not sufficiently focused on the progress that pupils of different abilities should make. Very limited use is made of targets to help pupils focus on their next steps in learning. Some activities are not well matched to the pupils' different capabilities and this results in some finding work too easy and others that it is too hard. The teachers' written marking does not consistently say what the pupils need to do in order to improve their work, much of which is untidy.

The school has made a useful start in developing assessment but much more remains to be done so that it is an effective process that assists both teaching and learning. Additionally, problems with ineffective information technology systems are limiting the teachers' use of pupil tracking and target setting. Pupils with special educational needs are identified and for the most part receive additional support in lessons. The very recently appointed coordinator has made a sound start in reviewing policies and assessment procedures. A small but significant number of pupils, some of whom are at a very early stage of learning English as a new language, have recently joined the school. There is very limited expertise within the school to respond to their specific language needs. The provision being made for them is inadequate.

The curriculum broadly meets national requirements. Changes to the school day and a reallocation of time to subjects taught have alleviated the issues reported previously in respect of curriculum coverage. Nevertheless, the curriculum is not well balanced as additional time is still required for literacy and numeracy to ensure that pupils make the best progress they can in these core subjects.

There are sound procedures in place to ensure that pupils work in a safe and healthy environment. However, the bad state of repair and poor decoration

detract from the quality of care being promoted and pupils' general well-being.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in June 2005:

- improve teaching in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2—satisfactory progress
- improve teachers' use of assessment to plan their teaching—inadequate progress
- improve the curriculum so that each subject receives enough time to give pupils a worthwhile experience, and that the school meets the recommended time at Key Stage 2—satisfactory progress.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school and is successfully tackling weaknesses with determination. There is a clear sense of educational direction. Satisfactory monitoring and evaluation provide the basis of accurate judgements about how far the school has come. The deputy headteacher and the Key Stage 1 coordinator provide helpful support and share the headteacher's commitment to improvement. The senior management team gives the school a satisfactory capacity to make further improvement.

Many of the procedures and policies have recently been updated which enables the school to function effectively on a daily basis. However, time spent on these activities has delayed action on pressing ahead with some important areas for improvement raised in the last inspection. The current school improvement plan relates to the key issues from the previous inspection. It has shortcomings because it lacks a specific timeline and weekly targets for action. This slows down the rate of change. For example, some key responsibilities have only just been allocated to teaching staff.

Subject responsibilities have been reallocated to teaching staff since September. The focus for this academic year is to improve the quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science. This work is in its infancy and has not yet had a sufficiently positive impact on all teachers.

Governance is satisfactory. The chair of governors has a sound understanding of the school's position in relation to the issues raised in the previous inspection and the school's priorities. The LA has provided the governors with useful training and guidance on their statutory duties and accountability.

The governors are beginning to have more impact on the school's strategic planning. To keep them informed, an update of progress is included on the governing body's agenda for meetings. This enables them to ask relevant questions and monitor the school's work more rigorously. A three year budget

plan is being developed to address the school's financial deficit which is essential to support the school's removal from special measures.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in June 2005:

- improve leadership, management and governance so that there is a clear understanding of the areas where improvement is necessary and that there is appropriate action to bring about the required urgent changes—satisfactory progress.

### **External support**

The LA, through the work of the school's school improvement adviser and other advisory staff, provides a satisfactory level of support. The quality of support provided to improve the school's leadership and management has been particularly effective in the appointment of new key staff.

The LA's statement of action is satisfactory. It concludes that the school should remain open and that the governors' action plan provides a satisfactory framework for improvement. The LA does not intend to appoint additional governors or remove their delegated powers despite the school's significant and considerable budget deficit. The LA expects the school to be removed from special measures by October 2006. There are very few quantified targets for evaluating the effectiveness of the LA's support.

### **Main judgements**

Progress since being subject to special measures—satisfactory.

Due to the considerable support currently required for existing teachers, newly qualified teachers may not be appointed at this time.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

The governors and headteacher should:

- secure consistency in the quality of teaching for pupils of all ability levels
- improve the progress pupils make in lessons through sharply focused planning that draws on rigorous assessment to inform their next steps in learning.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Diocese and the Director of Education for Northamptonshire.

Yours sincerely

**Linda Killman**  
**H M Inspector**