



27 February 2006

Mr P Moriarty  
Headteacher  
Good Shepherd Roman Catholic School  
Moorside Road  
Downham  
Bromley  
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Dear Mr Moriarty

## **SERIOUS WEAKNESSES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF GOOD SHEPHERD ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with Charalambos Loizou AI to your school on 6 and 7 February 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 was found to have serious weaknesses in June 2005.

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### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, groups of pupils, nominated staff, parents, the chair of governors, and a representative from the Local Authority (LA).

### **Context**

The headteacher was appointed to the school in April 2005, two months before it was inspected in June. Following the inspection, two newly qualified teachers have been appointed.

### **Achievement and standards**

Standards have risen significantly since the last inspection and are slightly below the national average in Year 6. The 2005 results in the national tests were a significant improvement on the previous year's and were close to the school's published targets for Level 4 and above. In Key Stage 2, there was a rise of approximately 13% in English, 17% in mathematics and 6% in science in the proportion of those pupils reaching the levels expected of eleven-year-olds. The small number of minority ethnic pupils achieved marginally better results than the white British pupils. Despite these improvements, too many boys did not perform as well as girls. In Key Stage 1, there was a notable improvement in the number of the more able pupils reaching level 3 and above in reading, writing and mathematics. The school recognises that pupils' performed less well in mathematics in Key Stage 1 and in science at Key Stage 2. Suitable steps have been taken to tackle underachievement.

The school acknowledges that previously low results in the national tests were linked to a number of factors, namely: the lack of robust initiatives to deal with weaknesses in literacy and numeracy, high staff turnover and low teacher expectations. Following the inspection, a range of support programmes were introduced and there is now a more coherent approach to improving standards. Evidence from assessment information and lesson observations show that the pupils are making satisfactory progress, overall.

Pupils' speaking and listening skills are generally well developed in Key Stage 2 but communication skills are weak in the Foundation Stage. However, the children make good progress towards reaching the expected learning goals in communication, language and literacy. Writing continues to be an area for improvement in both key stages particularly for the more able pupils but the use of various curriculum initiatives indicate that the pupils are making steady gains. The school has set challenging targets for raising standards still further and the assessment records of the pupils' progress show that they are on course to meet them.

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

- Raise standards particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and in all subjects for the more able pupils - satisfactory progress

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

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour were good in all lessons observed and at other times around the school such as break-times and after-school clubs.

They are keen to do well in lessons; however, a few occasionally became restless, especially when the teachers talked too much or the work was insufficiently challenging. The youngest children have been helped to settle into school routines and have made good progress improving their personal and social skills. The positive climate in which all are valued contributes much to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They are prepared well for life in a culturally diverse society through celebrating various traditions and customs. The school council takes its role seriously and has been influential in discussing improvements to resources and school lunches. They report that the teachers listen to their views, 'they care about us and there's a lot for us to do...it's great.' The pupils act responsibly in their role as monitors; they respect each other and have a well developed sense of justice and fairness as well as a clear awareness of healthy eating.

Attendance is slightly above the national average for primary schools. There have been no exclusions in recent years.

### **Quality of provision**

There has been reasonable improvement to the quality of teaching since the inspection in April 2005 and this is helping to raise standards. The teachers' planning is now more consistent so that lesson objectives are clear and shared with the pupils. The school has done much to improve the quality of teaching and learning and compared to the lessons seen at the last inspection, none was inadequate but the proportion of good teaching has not improved sufficiently. Sixteen lessons were observed and the teaching was satisfactory or better in all including five that were good. The proportion of good teaching is similar to that found at the time of the last inspection.

In the most effective lessons, the challenge offered for all groups was consistent, time was not wasted and the pupils were given timely activities and space to think. There was a purposeful range of tasks that helped all pupils to make at least satisfactory progress. The teachers and teaching assistants were precise about what they wanted the pupils to do. There were clear expectations which encouraged the pupils to work hard and do their best.

In a number of broadly satisfactory lessons, the overall pace was slow and pupils were too passive, with progress not being as quick as it needs to be. One of the changes since the last inspection has been to make sure that the

work is suitably matched to the wide ability range. This has improved, but some tasks were not challenging enough to accelerate the progress of the more able pupils.

Assessment systems are satisfactory and are increasingly being used to target groups of pupils for booster work. This is contributing to accelerating the progress of average attaining pupils and those at risk of underachieving. However, there remain some inconsistencies because the assessment information is not being used rigorously enough to stretch the more able pupils. Consequently, too few achieved the higher levels in the recent national tests. Target setting and teachers' marking have been refined so that assessments procedures are more systematic; though the quality of marking does not always help the pupils to improve their work further. There have been satisfactory improvements in using assessment to improve planning for children in the nursery and reception years. The support provided for the pupils at the early stages of learning English is not always appropriate; they are withdrawn from lessons but the effectiveness of this approach has not been evaluated.

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

- build on the improvements seen in teaching and learning and implement assessment and marking procedures securely in all subjects – satisfactory progress

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher provides good leadership. In two terms, since the last inspection, much has been achieved. He has been effective in raising expectations and establishing a positive ethos that is clearly focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning. This is reflected in the detailed school action plan and self evaluation which have contributed to the staff having a clear sense of direction on how to improve the quality of provision for pupils. These working papers show a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses and priorities for improvement are based on this understanding. The action plan is thorough and identifies timescales, actions, resources and monitoring and evaluation for the current academic year 2005-2006 and beyond where appropriate; however, the criteria against which success is to be measured are not always precise enough.

Subject co-ordinators are now more focused on the pupils' learning and achievement. They have an increasing understanding of how to begin

addressing areas for improvement based on newly revised job descriptions. Various factors are helping them to understand their management role and how to tackle underachievement effectively. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning and target setting by the headteacher, the LA and consultants is giving the school a realistic view of the quality of teaching and increasing the co-ordinator's grasp of what must be done to improve achievement in their area of work. Additionally, the co-ordinators now play a leading role in managing staff development. Professional development is now embedded and linked to the action plan and performance management. Team work underpins everything that they do; however, at this stage, the impact of the changes has not been fully evaluated to identify the next steps needed to improve standards.

Shortcomings in the accommodation and resources are being addressed, but improvements to the nursery and reception areas are a long term project because of the capital funding required. Plans for this have been submitted to the LA.

The school has done much to improve their partnership work with parents. There is now greater openness through workshop sessions, survey work, sharing information and a recently introduced academic review day. Parents report that they welcome the dialogue and consultation; they feel the quality of homework has improved but it could be more challenging.

The chair of governors is in regular contact with the headteacher and has an accurate understanding of the issues facing the school. Records of minutes show that the governors are better informed about the quality of provision. They are monitoring the delivery of the action plan and training is planned to increase their capacity to hold the school to account.

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

- Improve the accommodation particularly for the library, information and communication technology and the Foundation Stage - satisfactory progress
- Ensure that governors provide the challenge and rigour to move the school forward successfully - satisfactory progress
- Develop the role of co-ordinators - good progress
- Encourage greater parental involvement in their children's learning - for example, through homework - satisfactory progress

## External support

The LA's statement and commentary is satisfactory and provide a clear account of the history behind the pupils' underachievement and the school's incapacity to make any significant improvement despite the help previously given. The LA is meeting its commitment to supporting the school as outlined in the statement of action. The guidance and assistance given in literacy and numeracy have had a positive impact on sharpening practice and raising expectations. Training is planned for the governors. The intensive support statement complements aspects of the school's action plan well; however, the LA has not developed a separate plan to show how it will monitor the effectiveness of the school's improvement plan. Although not indicated in the plan, the LA has already made appropriate arrangements to ensure the school has the capacity to sustain improvements.

## Main Judgements

The school has made satisfactory progress in removing the causes of its serious weaknesses and is now better placed to sustain the improvements.

## Priorities for further improvement

- strengthen the quality of teaching so that a higher proportion of lessons are of good quality;
- evaluate the effectiveness of all changes in order to identify the impact on raising standards and the next steps needed;
- ensure there is a consistent approach to marking pupils' work and setting clear targets so that they understand how to improve their work.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Roman Catholic diocese of Southwark and the Executive Director of Children and Young People Services for Lewisham.

Yours sincerely

Carmen Rodney  
**H M Inspector**