



30 June 2006

Mrs L Heneghan  
The Headteacher  
English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School  
Dee Road  
Tilehurst  
Reading  
RG30 4BE

Dear Mrs Heneghan

## **SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ENGLISH MARTYRS' CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with Marianne Young AI to your school on 14 and 15 June 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 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 observed the school's work including 16 lessons or part lessons, scrutinised documents and met with members of the senior management team, two other members of staff and the chair of governors.

### **Context**

The school's context is largely unchanged from the previous monitoring visit. The headteacher returned to work after a four week absence due to ill health around the time of the previous visit. An additional teacher has been appointed temporarily for the second reception class established for the summer term. All other teachers are in the same posts although some will be leaving in July.

Governors have already made three teaching appointments for September and expect to make one further one soon.

## **Achievement and standards**

Children in the Foundation Stage are still not all making the progress that can be expected although some aspects of provision have improved. They respond respectfully to the teachers, helpers and each other. They are clear about daily routines and what tasks they are expected to do or can choose from. The extent to which tasks are undertaken with enjoyment and enthusiasm is still too variable as are the outcomes of children's work, particularly written or creative; much of it is rushed and left uncared for. Children's enthusiasm for and enjoyment of books is not apparent and not enough is done to promote it. There are signs of improvement in children's ability to listen to each other politely and express themselves clearly.

In Years 1 to 6, pupils' progress in lessons is satisfactory overall with some good progress linked to good teaching and learning. Pupils are developing their speaking skills well because of the increased number of opportunities to work in pairs as 'response partners', for example, and this is helping them to clarify ideas, often before putting them into writing.

Teachers' assessments for reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2 show improved outcomes from those in 2005. The rate of progress over Key Stage 1 is improving overall. Standards in the current Year 6 are also higher than in the previous year, from a similar group of pupils, based on their Key Stage 1 results. Standards in the current Year 5 are not as high as they should be. This is partly due to the fact that this year group has had an unsettled year or so with staffing changes that have impeded good continuity of learning for some pupils. The school has identified clearly exactly where the pockets of underachievement lie. Interventions have been successful in boosting progress for some Year 5 pupils, particularly the lower attaining ones.

The school has continued to strengthen its systems for tracking pupils' progress. The senior management team has a very good grasp of the progress being made by each pupil in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, based on the good work of the assessment coordinator, the deputy head. There is still more to be done to develop these assessment systems so that the school can evaluate the progress of whole year groups as well as individual pupils. The school sets itself challenging targets and this is entirely appropriate given the need to catch up on some previously lost ground, particularly for the current Year 5 pupils. For various reasons, it was not possible to explore closely during this visit the achievement of the most able pupils throughout the school although some pupils clearly attain highly.

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

- improve standards and ensure that all groups of pupils make the expected progress in each key stage - satisfactory progress.

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

Pupils' personal development and well-being continue to be good. Behaviour in lessons and at break times is good. Older pupils accept responsibility willingly and enjoy the opportunity to help and support younger ones. Pupils are polite, talk sensibly with adults and are confident to give their opinions. They thoroughly enjoy all that the school has to offer, including the wide range of clubs during and after school. In the dance club held before school, for example, both boys and girls worked hard to perfect their routines, taking a pride in their work. There is a strong caring ethos throughout the school and this has a clear and positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which is good. Pupils have a concern for and are sensitive to others' views and feelings but their awareness and understanding of different faiths and cultures are not well developed. Pupils talk knowledgeably about how to be fit, healthy and stay safe. They are developing well in their ability to work collaboratively and independently.

### **Quality of provision**

Educational provision is satisfactory in Years 1 to 6 but it still has shortcomings in the Foundation Stage although some improvements are visible.

Some satisfactory teaching and learning were seen in both reception classes but overall, provision in the Foundation Stage is inadequate because too many children are still not making enough progress in all the areas of learning. The quality varies between the two classes and also within a class. Outdoor learning is satisfactory with a reasonable range of resources for physical and creative development. Both Foundation Stage classrooms have been developed since the previous monitoring visit but further development is required, particularly for literacy. The current provision does not make for a brisk enough start in developing early reading and writing skills. In one of the classes, the outcomes of children's work are not gathered, presented or stored with sufficient care or respect and this leads to some careless work. Teachers have established adequate daily routines to which the youngest children are still adapting. Older children sometimes need further guidance about which areas they need to be working in to ensure breadth of experience. The evaluation of lessons has improved in the Foundation Stage but this is not always leading to tasks in subsequent lessons that are well matched to each child's needs.

In Years 1 to 6, most teaching and learning are at least satisfactory and much of it is good. The strengths are in classroom management and organisation, relationships with pupils, and well prepared resources. Most teaching shows confident subject knowledge and good collaboration with teaching assistants. Planning is secure and staff know what pupils have already attained and what can be expected from them. Teachers promote good behaviour and concentration well through a wide range of strategies and pupils respond positively to the clearly set out timescales for work, the appropriate levels of praise given, and pleasant tidy classrooms. Occasionally, well planned lessons do not have their potential impact on learning because the teacher's instructions are not entirely clear to pupils. In some lessons, even where teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, the level of challenge is inconsistent for pupils of different ability, or teaching methods lack variety because the teacher talks too long or does not involve all pupils. In a few lessons, good use is made of the interactive whiteboards but the use of this resource is generally in its early stages.

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school has placed an emphasis on English and mathematics but other subjects have not suffered as a result, and the curriculum maintains an appropriate breadth and balance. The Foundation Stage curriculum covers all the required areas of learning. The range of visits, clubs and visitors, noted during the previous visit, continues to extend pupils' understanding and enjoyment of their work as well as introducing them to new skills and interests. The school has now identified pupils who are gifted and talented and is reviewing the curriculum to check that it matches their needs as closely as possible.

Care and support for pupils are good and firmly founded in the Catholic ethos of the school. All adults working in the school are committed to ensuring pupils' welfare and to helping them develop into confident and responsible young people. Teacher's confidence in using data about pupil's attainment has increased. This is enabling teachers to target support more effectively to those pupils who need additional help. The extent to which pupils are made aware of their own targets is very uneven across the school. In addition, pupils are not as clear about their own progress or quality of work as they might be.

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

- improve the consistency of the teaching and learning with a particular emphasis upon meeting the full range of the pupils' attainment and needs – satisfactory progress.

## **Leadership and management**

There has been good improvement in leadership and management which are now satisfactory. The headteacher, senior managers, governors and advisers from the

local authority have worked tirelessly to drive forward the schools' key priorities for improvement, especially those linked to the quality of teaching and learning. The use of assessment data is now more widely used and understood by staff in order to identify the progress made by pupils and plan lessons appropriately. This has resulted in a generally more consistent approach to the teaching of literacy and numeracy in particular. All staff are united in their determination to raise standards. They regularly share with each other ways to improve their own classroom practice.

Inspectors agree with the adviser from the local authority when he wrote in a recent monitoring report that 'those who monitor teaching are well aware of the key elements of good teaching and have a sound process for implementing such monitoring.' The check list used by senior staff when observing lessons focuses mainly on teachers' work and behaviour. It does include some items related to learning but far fewer than for teaching. Teachers speak positively about the way the headteacher and others visit lessons, discuss their merits and identify points for development.

Members of the senior management team are working with enthusiasm on the improvement areas for which they are responsible. They have a clear and realistic view about how, and how quickly, weaknesses can be improved. Since the previous monitoring visit, systems for measuring and evaluating the school's progress have improved and are now good albeit new and not fully tested. It is too soon to measure the full impact of these in relation to sustained improvement in outcomes for pupils. Senior managers recognise that the current school improvement plan contains only priority items for the short term. They are in the process of writing the next plan to include longer term aims.

Governors have increased the effectiveness of their work. They have established clearly what indicators of success they are looking at. They are both supporting and challenging the staff to explain how provision and outcomes are improving. Staff feel accountable to the governing body.

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

- ensure that the leadership and management adopt more rigorous approaches to the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work - good progress.

## **External support**

The local authority continues to provide appropriate support. An 'Intensified Support Plan' is already being prepared for the Autumn Term with some of this work starting before September. Together with the Diocese, the local authority has

worked with governors in their resolve to secure support for the headteacher and deputy. This has resulted in governors engaging a Reading consultant headteacher, informally this term and for one day a week initially from September. This arrangement is welcomed by the headteacher and deputy, and initial contacts have proved useful. Consultants and advisers from the local authority have worked with the school to establish improvement plans for the Foundation Stage. They are to work with governors to develop their understanding of what constitutes high quality provision and outcomes for children at this stage. The local authority has kept a close eye on the extent to which the school is moving forward successfully and the brief evaluation report written recently is an accurate reflection of progress in moving out of 'special measures'.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- improve the work on evaluating the quality of lessons by placing an increased focus on pupils' learning
- develop pupils' understanding of their own targets for learning and their ability to evaluate their own progress and quality of work

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Director of Education & Community Services for Reading and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth.

Yours sincerely

Wiola Hola  
**H M Inspector**