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Mrs J Deasy  
The Headteacher  
Holy Cross Catholic Primary School  
Laburnum Drive  
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West Midlands  
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Dear Mrs Deasy

#### OFSTED MONITORING OF SCHOOLS WITH NOTICE TO IMPROVE

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 15 May 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the chair of governors, those teachers observed, and the staff and pupils who met with me.

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.

As a result of the inspection in September 2006, the school was asked to:

- use assessment information more rigorously to increase the rate of progress in writing and mathematics in all year groups
- ensure that higher attainers in all year groups are given more challenging work
- improve the role of subject leaders in monitoring and evaluating standards in their subjects and in contributing to school self-evaluation
- ensure that the governing body hold staff accountable for the standards that pupils attain by asking for relevant information about pupils' progress

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making inadequate overall progress, particularly with regard to addressing the first two points for improvement. Ofsted will continue to monitor the school's progress on the issues where improvement has so far been inadequate.

The school is tracking pupils' attainment and overall progress, but data is not being effectively analysed or used to increase the rate of pupils' progress in writing and mathematics or to improve teaching. The recent evaluation of pupils' progress in reading, writing and numeracy indicates significant underachievement in these

subjects. Too many pupils have made insufficient progress over the past two terms and there is much catching up to do.

Data are not being used strategically to determine how well different groups of pupils are achieving or to target intervention. For example, 2006 results indicated that some girls in Year 2 were underachieving yet their progress has not been monitored and the reasons for their underperformance have not been properly explored. When planning lessons teachers are not using assessment information effectively enough to ensure work is properly matched to pupils' differing capabilities. It remains the case that there is far too much satisfactory teaching and not enough that is good.

Higher attainers are still not being sufficiently challenged in all years. The headteacher has been instrumental in improving planning and teachers are beginning to set different activities for the differing abilities. However, teachers are generally setting their sights too low and expectations are not high enough. The progress made by higher attainers is inconsistent within subjects and between year groups. In September inspectors judged that the more able children in Reception were underachieving in writing and the position remains the same. The youngest pupils' writing is not good enough and the higher attainers are capable of doing much more. In contrast, the writing skills of higher attainers in Year 6 are developing well. This is because teaching is effective and pupils are given interesting and stimulating activities to do. Predicted results and work scrutiny indicate that writing standards in Year 6 are higher than in 2006.

The school has made satisfactory progress in improving the role of subject leaders, but there is still much more to do. The headteacher has ensured subject leaders have clear job descriptions and that they are accountable for the standards and quality of education provided in their subjects. The literacy and numeracy leaders have monitored lessons, tracked pupils' progress, and scrutinised work. They have a sound understanding of the standards achieved and the strengths and weaknesses in both subjects. Reports on what they have found out are sent to governors and contribute to self review. Whilst a start has been made on evaluating provision in individual subjects, the follow up of weaknesses in teaching and learning by senior leaders is not yet systematic or robust enough. The necessary improvements in teaching and learning are not being carried out at a fast enough rate.

There has also been satisfactory progress on the governance issue. The governing body now hold staff accountable for the standards that pupils attain. The newly formed monitoring curriculum group are asking for, and receiving, relevant information about provision and its impact on standards. Whilst governors have a better oversight of provision, the impact of their new system cannot yet be judged. The chair of governors and headteacher belong to the monitoring and intervention group (MIG) that suitably oversees the progress made on each area of development. The chair of governors has been very supportive and has the confidence of staff. He knows that the school has improved in some areas but recognises the rate of improvement is not fast enough. Governors are not yet robust enough in calling the

headteacher to account for the lack of improvement in the areas that are inadequate.

The local authority has provided satisfactory support since the school was given a Notice to Improve. The MIG group has provided adequate oversight of progress on each point for improvement. The local authority inspected the school in March 2007 and judged that the school had made inadequate progress in addressing three out of the four areas for improvement. The report clearly identified what the school does well and what it must do to improve. The first local authority statement of action was not good enough. The revised one is satisfactory.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

David Rzeznik  
Her Majesty's Inspector