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11 June 2007

Mr G Hirst
The Headteacher
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School
Mere Close
off Mere Road
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Leicestershire
LE5 3HH

Dear Mr Hirst

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 5 June 2007 and for the information which you provided before and during my visit.

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 on 1 and 2 November 2006, the school was asked to:

- raise achievement and standards, particularly in mathematics and science
- improve teaching and learning, particularly in Years 3 to 6
- improve leadership and management to ensure that all pupils progress as well as they should throughout the school.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievements.

There have been several staff changes since the last inspection. One teacher left in April and two others are on long term absence. The Year 4 class that has experienced particular turbulence is currently being taught by the two assistant headteachers, with long term supply cover arrangements for other groups. Suitable changes to the school's management and staffing structure have been made, or are planned, and new teaching appointments have been made for September.

The school has responded positively to the findings of the last inspection despite some initial repudiation. The most effective work has been undertaken in strengthening teaching and improving the systems for assessing and tracking the pupils' progress. The overall quality of teaching has improved. Lessons are more

sharply focused on what individual pupils should achieve and work is better paced, with a better balance and range of learning activities to engage pupils in their learning. The proportion of good teaching has increased and elements of outstanding practice are emerging. Teachers know what levels the pupils are working at in English, mathematics and science, and the standards that they ought to achieve. Moreover, pupils' progress is underpinned and properly guided by improvements in marking, much of which is excellent. Most pupils know their targets and understand what they need to do to improve. However, until the school is able to resolve its current staffing uncertainties, the overall quality of teaching remains uneven.

Improvements in teaching have led to a concomitant improvement in pupils' learning and in the progress that they make over time. School assessment data indicates that significantly more pupils are now on track to meet age related targets by the end of the year. The school has made satisfactory progress in raising standards, particularly in mathematics and science. However, there remains some variability in pupils' rates of progress between different classes and occasionally between subjects.

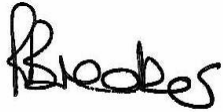
The school's challenging context is outlined in the inspection report. Nonetheless, it continues to successfully address the social and academic needs of the large numbers of newly arrived pupils, mostly from Poland and Slovakia, who are at an early stage of learning English. The good support for these pupils, particularly by the skilful teaching assistants, as well as for the other pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs, ensures that they make at least satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management have strengthened. As a team, the headteacher and assistant headteachers have guided the staff well over the last six months and have successfully focused on raising attainment. Staff are clear about the school's higher expectations and their positive morale has been recovered. Systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work, although embryonic, are more rigorous and are now soundly based on accurate assessment data. The work of the governing body is more sharply focused on pupils' standards and achievement and proper procedures are developing in order to effectively hold the school to account. Much of the drive for school improvement comes from the two assistant headteachers whose work is both strategic and evaluative. Subject leadership in literacy and mathematics is good and the role of the science coordinator is developing well. Subject leaders make effective use of data to track pupils' progress and to inform suitably targeted support for pupils at risk of underachieving. Since April the school has established an essential layer of middle management that was previously lacking.

The local authority has provided a suitable balance of support and challenge which has enabled the school to accept and address its previous shortcomings. Effective support has been provided for the school's leadership through the judicious appointment of an additional governor and by a mentor headteacher. In general the guidance provided by subject advisors has been good, although the support for mathematics has not been as positively received.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brooker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'B'.

Paul Brooker
Her Majesty's Inspector