

11 October 2007

Mrs Markham
Headteacher
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Park Lane
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD5 0RB

Dear Mrs Markham

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 10 October, 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, pupils and staff who gave their time to meet 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 January 2007, the school was asked to raise standards and achievement at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, especially in mathematics and science, and to ensure that the needs of vulnerable pupils, especially those arriving during the year, are clearly identified and provided for.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making outstanding progress.

Standards and achievement have improved significantly across the school. Unvalidated results for the 2007 national tests show that standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science were above average. This is a considerable improvement on the below average standards of 2006 and represents the best achievement for pupils in a number of years. At Key Stage 1, standards overall remain below average, although they rose in mathematics compared to 2006. In reading and writing standards remained similar to 2006. However, in relation to the pupils' skills and abilities on entry to the key stage, the school's own assessment information demonstrates most pupils made at least satisfactory and in some cases good progress.

When viewed in the context of the well above average proportions of pupils who take free school meals, speak English as an additional language and enter or leave

the school at points throughout the school year, this is a considerable achievement. The school is aware of the need to further improve standards in literacy across the school, especially in writing and particularly for boys.

Staff have responded to the Notice to Improve with a shared commitment to raising standards and to sustaining and building upon improvement. New arrangements for leadership and management, established just at the time of the school's inspection, have been a key factor in driving improvement. Clear roles and responsibilities have helped the school to focus on the priorities of improving teaching, by making better use of assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress, and by better supporting individual learning needs.

Teachers have a clearer understanding of what is expected of them. They have been supported by the local authority and through in-house training and development led by members of the senior leadership team. Senior staff have been pro-active in visiting other schools to observe elements of good practice from which to model school policy. Sharper systems of monitoring are used to hold class teachers to account for the quality of their work through the outcomes of regular pupil assessments. Effective partnership working between learning mentors, teaching assistants and teachers was confirmed through discussions and lesson observations. On this visit there was evidence of some good use of assessment in both key stages to check pupils' understanding as the lesson progressed. The gains many pupils are able to make in their education are accelerated by their good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. They report that the 'feedback on learning' policy helps them to improve their work and they are clearly motivated by the rewards they receive for achievement.

The headteacher has increased the emphasis on, and provision for, learning support. The impact of strategies to support learning is evident in the improving picture of pupils' achievements. Initial assessment of pupils with English as an additional language and those new to English is rigorous. The school has been successful in securing the assistance of mother-tongue speakers to provide language support for Eastern European children recently arrived to the area. Vulnerable pupils, at risk of underachievement, have their short-term targets monitored through individual education plans. Regular reviews by the deputy headteacher and class teachers track their progress and lead to appropriate action where necessary.

The impact of the school's sharper focus on targeting support for individual learning needs, improving classroom practice and greater stability in staffing is reflected in the improved outcomes for all pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Cathy Kirby
Her Majesty's Inspector