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8 November 2007  
Mr P Cleary  
Headteacher  
St Mary's RC Primary and Nursery School  
East Anglian Way  
Gorleston  
Great Yarmouth  
Norfolk  
NR31 6QY

Dear Mr Cleary,

#### SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ST MARY'S RC PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Julie Winyard HMI to your school on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> November, 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 became subject to special measures in May 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures - satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Norfolk.

Yours sincerely

Tricia Pritchard  
H M Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF ST MARY'S RC PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> November 2007

### Evidence

Inspectors observed lessons, scrutinised documents and pupils' work and held meetings with the senior management team, pupils, the vice chair of governors and a representative from the Local Authority.

### Context

Since the inspection in May 2007, a new chair of governors and an additional local authority governor and foundation governor have been appointed. An improvement board has been convened and meets monthly. Several staff have moved within the school to teach different year groups. Pupils in Year 1 and Year 3 are taught by two part-time teachers who job share. One of the teachers in Year 1 is providing maternity cover and had only been in post a week at the time of the monitoring visit. Year 6 pupils are taught by the Deputy Head and a part-time teacher. Two newly qualified teachers were appointed before the school went into special measures and they commenced their posts in September.

### Achievement and standards

Standards and achievement in all subjects at Key Stage 1 and in writing at Key Stage 2 were identified as key issues during the inspection in May 2007. Since then, the results of the 2007 Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 assessments in English, mathematics and science have become available. These show that Year 2 pupils did much better in mathematics in 2007 than in 2006; results were in line with the national average. However, the pupils' overall performance in English continues to be below the national average. Reading scores for the past two years are particularly low in comparison to those of pupils in other schools; writing scores improved in 2007 and are just slightly below the national average. Overall, pupils underachieve in Key Stage 1 in comparison with their Foundation Stage profile. Currently, there are signs that pupils are making satisfactory progress in reading and mathematics in relation to their starting points although standards are still below average. However, it is difficult to measure the progress of pupils in writing because there is insufficient evidence in books.

The 2007 pupil performance data shows that pupils in Year 6 last year made inadequate progress in all subjects but especially in mathematics and science. Standards at the end of Year 6 dipped considerably from being broadly in line with the national average for the last three years to significantly below in 2007. The school attributes this dip in performance to instability in staffing. On scrutinising the school's own tracking records and the work of pupils currently in Key Stage 2, there is still evidence of underachievement in mathematics but evidence of satisfactory progress in reading and writing. Progress and attainment in science was not investigated in depth on this visit. The pupils' writing skills are getting better because

they are being given more opportunities to write for different purposes and audiences and more help to improve their writing.

Throughout the school, pupils with English as an additional language do very well and achieve standards which are above the national average and higher than pupils whose first language is English. Pupils with additional learning needs have historically not done as well as similar pupils in other schools. However, the catch-up programme for reading is beginning to have an impact on raising the achievement of current pupils with additional learning needs.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2007:

- Raise standards in all subjects at KS1 and in writing at KS2 - satisfactory progress.

### Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being remain satisfactory. Pupils are keen to learn and behave well when the pace of lessons is brisk. In lessons where the pace flags and work is not well matched to ability, there is low level noise which impedes learning. At lunchtime, pupils demonstrate that they understand the importance of eating healthily. They enjoy school. However, despite the school's best efforts, attendance patterns remain below average. Too many families take their children out of school for holidays.

### Quality of provision

Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Half of the lessons observed during the visit were good but in others there were weaknesses in certain areas; for example, there are some shortcomings in the teaching of mathematics in Key Stage 2 and inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in one Key Stage 1 class. As a result, the school is not currently on track to achieve its target of sixty percent good or better teaching by December 2007.

Behaviour in the majority of lessons is good with the school's new policy being used well by most teachers. In the good lessons observed, teachers had high expectations and applied the school's behaviour policy effectively. Lessons moved at an appropriate pace and pupils were given a clear timeframe as to how long an activity would take. Resources were used effectively. Teaching assistants were well deployed and gave high quality support to groups of pupils and to individuals; worksheets were fit for purpose. However none of these attributes was seen consistently in every lesson.

Differentiation is an issue in mathematics at Key Stage 2 where pupils' books show very little evidence of different work being set to match the learning needs of different groups of pupils and teachers' subject knowledge is not always secure. In the Key Stage 1 class, the lack of co-ordination of learning and planning means that pupils do not make steady progress throughout the week.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pupils feel safe at school and say that the incidents of bullying are very few. When they do occur, the school has appropriate procedures to deal with them.

A start has been made on introducing a system to track pupils' progress but procedures have yet to become embedded fully in practice. The new marking system is working well in some classes but not so well in others. Where marking is effective the teacher highlights the good points, explains why they are good and gives helpful advice on how to improve. In some work there is evidence of time being given for re-drafting based upon teachers' comments but this is the exception. Teachers' confidence in recognising and teaching the features of good quality writing, however, has increased with help from the local authority's literacy team.

Progress with the key issues from the last inspection:

Ensure teachers have an accurate view of how well pupils are doing so that they can set appropriately challenging work to accelerate their progress – inadequate progress.

Identify precisely what it is about pupils' writing which prevents them from reaching higher standards and take more appropriate steps to improve it – satisfactory progress.

### Leadership and management

The membership of the senior management team is based upon a sound rationale and includes the core subject leaders as well as the headteacher and deputy head. Since the inspection in May 2007, the headteacher has undertaken a systematic programme of lesson observations and given helpful written feedback to teachers, particularly on their implementation of the behaviour plan. The monitoring role of subject leaders has also been strengthened. For example, the numeracy subject leader has observed lessons and given focused feedback, and the literacy coordinator has conducted joint observations with the headteacher. Two good developments are the links which have been established with the local high school, which is a science and technology college, and the appointment of the deputy head as science coordinator. Both of these initiatives are raising the profile of science teaching in the school and pupils say they enjoy their science lessons.

However, while the above are positive developments and represent improvements in the leadership and management of the school, there is room for improvement in defining the strategic direction of the school. The senior leadership team has not been proactive enough in analysing the outcomes of the 2007 end-of-Key Stage 2 assessment in order to inform self evaluation and improvement planning. A range of development plans and action plans, and a raising attainment plan have been drawn up but there is no coherent document which sets out clearly the links between them. Staff development is not yet integral to the action planning process. Many teachers have changed year groups this year but have had too few opportunities to engage in personalised development activities to assist them with their new roles. There is

scope for identifying the most important priorities and working on those before moving on to other initiatives. This requires the leadership team and the governors to adopt a more strategic approach than that which exists at present.

The management of special needs is satisfactory overall. Individual education plans are in place and the special needs coordinator (SENCO) works well with outside agencies. However, the SENCO has insufficient opportunities to meet with teaching assistants and to monitor special needs provision in classrooms.

Governance is improving. The governing body has been strengthened by the appointment of additional governors. The new committee structure is well conceived and terms of reference are in the process of being agreed. The governors have conducted a self audit and are analysing the outcomes in order to inform governor development. Satisfactory progress has been made with addressing the safeguarding issue which was identified during the last inspection. The headteacher has attended child protection training and the deputy head is booked into a training session in November. A governor has been nominated to take responsibility for child protection and safeguarding. An important area for development relates to staff recruitment where governors have not been routinely involved. In particular, there are no clear and robust criteria for filling temporary staff vacancies.

Inspectors did not have the opportunity to meet parents during the visit. However, the school has introduced measures to involve parents more in their children's education. The 'rhino books' serve as useful home/school diaries to record homework and communicate with parents. There are also regular newsletters and the curriculum maps for each class are displayed in the school entrance hall for all to see.

Inspectors acknowledge that the leadership team and governors have worked hard to put in place systems and procedures to help address the key inspection issues. This was an important first step. On the next visit, evidence of their impact on accelerating pupils' progress and improving consistency in the quality of teaching will be sought.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2007:

- ensure all requirements for safeguarding children are put in place immediately - satisfactory progress
- Improve the leadership and management at all levels so that together they develop more rigorous systems for checking how well the school is doing and identify the most important priorities for improvement and the most effective ways for bringing about change - satisfactory progress

#### External support

The local authority is giving good support to the school. This takes the form of an intensive support programme for literacy and numeracy and additional link adviser time. The local authority has appointed an experienced governor, who has become

the new chair of governors, and an officer chairs the Improvement Board which was set up to address the issues from the last inspection. The local authority is also working effectively with the diocese to improve leadership and management. An experienced headteacher has been identified to act as a leadership mentor.

The target date for removal from special measures is July 2008. At the present time, this appears to be an ambitious target unless the rate of progress is accelerated during the next six months.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Improving strategic leadership and management.
- Improving consistency in the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.
- Raising standards in mathematics in Key Stage 2.