

Tribal Group  
1-4 Portland  
Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR  
T 0845 123 6001  
F 0845 123 6002

T 08456 40 40 40  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mrs R Iannarilli  
The Acting Headteacher  
St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School  
Dartmouth Avenue  
Coalpool  
Walsall  
West Midlands  
WS3 1SP

Dear Mrs Iannarilli

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ST THOMAS OF  
CANTERBURY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit with Barry Wood, Additional Inspector, to your school on 12 and 13 December 2007, 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 June 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report 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.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors the Director of Education Walsall and The Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi  
H M Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 12 and 13 December 2007

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, analysed pupils' work, and met with the headteacher, groups of pupils, the school council, the chair and vice chair of governors, a representative from Education Walsall, the senior teachers and the school office staff.

### Context

Following the previous inspection, the governors appointed a leadership consultant for the autumn term. At the end of September the previous headteacher resigned. Last week, the leadership consultant agreed to stay on as the acting headteacher until July 2008. The governors also appointed a newly qualified teacher (NQT) prior to June 2007 and an experienced teacher for Reception. Both teachers took up their post in September 2007. The Year 2 teacher is currently absent through illness and her post is being covered by a temporary teacher. The Diocese, in consultation with Education Walsall, recently appointed two new foundation governors. They were elected chair and vice chair of the governing body in November 2007.

### Achievement and standards

Standards overall remain below that expected at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2, despite recent improvements. In the latest end of Key Stage 1 teacher assessment, standards in reading and writing were below age related expectations. They were well below in mathematics. At the end of Key Stage 2, standards in English and mathematics were below the national average. Attainment in science remained exceptionally low. From their starting points in Year 2, pupils in Year 6 made broadly satisfactory progress in English and mathematics. They made inadequate progress in science.

With intensive support from Education Walsall consultants, the newly appointed teachers in Nursery and Reception have maintained effective provision in the Foundation Stage. Staff in these year groups have improved the indoor and outdoor learning environments, started to monitor the progress of individual children, and use this information to plan appropriate tasks. Consequently, children are making the expected rates of progress in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development.

Since September, the progress made by pupils in Years 1 to 6 has been too slow. Evidence from work in pupils' books and classroom observations indicates that pupils' progress in each year group remains unsatisfactory. This is because of weaknesses in the quality of teaching.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in June 2007:

- increase the rate of pupil progress – inadequate.

### Personal development and well-being

The acting headteacher has given the pupils a voice through the introduction of a school council. Members of the school council spoke with enthusiasm about their work and the increasing pride they have in the school. They were particularly excited about the increase in clubs and the opportunities to be more involved in the life of the school. Relationships between pupils and the adults they work with are generally positive. However, pupils behave less well during lessons when activities do not sufficiently challenge them. They lose their concentration and become restless. Attendance remains below the national average with almost one in three pupils missing school on a regular basis. This is having a detrimental impact on the progress of these pupils.

### Quality of provision

The quality of teaching remains inadequate overall. In Key Stages 1 and 2 it ranges from satisfactory to inadequate. It is satisfactory in the Foundation Stage.

Since the previous inspection, Education Walsall consultants and the acting headteacher have worked with staff to improve the quality of teaching. As a result, there is evidence that some teachers are beginning to focus not only on what pupils need to learn but also how they can help pupils to learn. For instance, a few teachers were seen explaining the learning objective by showing pupils how to complete the task and the steps they needed to take to check they were completing the task successfully. In some lessons pupils were encouraged to work with a partner to discuss what they were learning and in one lesson the teacher used questions effectively to check for understanding.

Nevertheless, teaching remains inadequate. In too many lessons pupils do not make the progress they are capable of because tasks do not meet the learning needs of pupils with different abilities. Too often, all pupils are given activities pitched at the same level of difficulty, which results in a lack of challenge for the higher attaining pupils. Teachers also place an insufficient emphasis on ensuring pupils have the basic skills and knowledge they need to make faster progress, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils' work is now regularly marked with all staff providing positive comments. However, marking does not yet consistently provide pupils with the guidance they need to meet their next step in learning or how to correct their errors. This was reported previously.

The acting headteacher has introduced a whole school approach to assessing the levels pupils are working at so that staff can use this information to plan lessons. However, the levels that staff have allocated to pupils are over generous and do not

match the quality of work in books. The acting headteacher has sound plans in place to moderate teachers' assessments.

Important changes have been made to the teaching timetables so there is a greater balance between subjects. The acting headteacher has also introduced a whole school approach to planning. However, this is a recent change and has not had time to embed. There are currently not enough opportunities for pupils to extend and apply their literacy and mathematical skills through other subjects. For example, the overuse of worksheets in other subjects means pupils are often restricted to writing words and phrases. Provision for information and communication technology has improved, although staff have not had sufficient training to enable them to use this equipment effectively.

The school now meets most of the statutory health and safety requirements. A health and safety policy has been implemented, risk assessments are in place, and staff have received training for child protection and first aid. The school is in the final stages of completing safeguarding checks.

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning by using assessment information to plan lessons that provide sufficient challenge and meet the learning needs of all pupils – inadequate
- further enrich the curriculum by using information and communication technology (ICT) and developing more effective links between subjects – inadequate
- improve the care of pupils by ensuring that all statutory requirements are met, in particular regarding pupils' safety – satisfactory.

### Leadership and management

In a relatively short period of time, the acting headteacher has started the process of bringing about the necessary improvements to move the school in the right direction. She has been successful in keeping good morale amongst the staff, developing a positive school ethos, and gaining the confidence of the school community. Consequently, an increasing number of parents are involved in the work of the school and are responding positively to the changes taking place. The acting headteacher has introduced systems for monitoring the work of the school including more frequent checks of pupils' progress. Action has begun to deal with weaknesses in teaching. She has also ensured that policies and procedures to ensure the school meets statutory health and safety requirements have been put into place. These are all positive developments.

The other senior leaders in the school have become more aware of their roles and responsibilities. However, there is still a long way to go. They do not yet have the skills needed to lead developments in their areas of responsibility. They are very reliant on the headteacher to lead on all aspects of school improvement including day to day management.

Although the school's work is beginning to be monitored much more effectively, these arrangements are not yet consistent, systematic and rigorous. The written

feedback to staff, following lesson observations and analysis of pupils' work, is too general. It does not give staff the guidance they need to accelerate pupils' progress or improve the quality of their teaching. In addition, there are not enough checks to ensure strategies are implemented consistently by all staff. The acting headteacher is introducing a more rigorous arrangement for evaluating the work of the school in January. This is expected to involve senior leaders, staff and governors.

The school has not completed a school development plan. Consequently, there is very little shared understanding of the school's most pressing priorities and the actions that need be taken to eliminate the school's significant weaknesses. The draft plan does not make a clear distinction between actions that involve teaching staff and those that relate to senior leaders in the school. Also, it does not contain success criteria to show how progress will be measured.

The governing body has been strengthened by the appointment of a new chair and vice chair. They are enthusiastic, supportive and are beginning to hold the school to account for the progress made by pupils. Governors are now more involved in checking the work of the school and are in the process of setting up a working party to complete a school development plan.

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

- improve the quality of leadership by more consistent, systematic and rigorous evaluation of the school's performance and by completing school plans that have realistic and ambitious targets for future development – inadequate.

#### External support

Since the previous inspection, Education Walsall consultants have worked with the school to support the monitoring of teaching, provided training, supported staff with planning, and helped to introduce a systems for tracking the progress of children in the Foundation Stage. However, the impact of this work has been inadequate. Significant weaknesses remain in the quality of teaching, the use of assessment information by staff, and the accurate levelling of pupils' work. Equally, advice has not always been suitably focused on the most pressing priorities.

#### Priorities for further improvement

There are no further priorities for improvement.