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Mrs Y Best
The Head of School
St Edward's Roman Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Best

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 6 February 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please thank the pupils, staff and chair of governors for their contributions. Please also convey my thanks to the executive headteacher and school improvement adviser who I also met. I noted that since the last inspection, the governors appointed a head of school following the creation of close working links with another local primary school; an arrangement known as a 'soft federation'. An executive headteacher now oversees both schools.

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 25 and 26 January 2007, the school was asked to:

- introduce rigorous systems to check how well the school is doing so that governors are better informed to fulfil their duties effectively
- ensure all pupils know what they need to do to reach the next steps in learning
- ensure that lessons provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to work at tasks that are at the right level and will help them to reach their targets.

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

Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to the school's leadership. The previous headteacher retired and a new head of school was appointed last term as a result of the 'soft federation'. The pace of improvement has stepped up significantly as a clear, compelling vision for the school's future has been set. Systems used to gather information about pupils' achievements and other

aspects of the school's work have been revised and are now far-reaching and effective. The termly analysis of pupils' progress now highlights clearly those who make good strides in their learning, as well as those who are falling behind. As a result, class teachers have a very clear idea of how their own pupils make progress, as well as those in other year groups. These improvements in teachers' understanding of pupils' progress are influencing their planning so lessons and group activities are more closely matched to pupils' abilities. The clearer picture of pupils' rates of progress means senior leaders communicate emerging strengths more effectively with governors. To support this two-way dialogue, the way the governing body oversees the school's progress has also changed for the better. Led effectively by a new chair of governors appointed last term, governors now have clearer roles, more effective committee structures and better communication channels with the school. This two-fold improvement, although at a comparatively early stage, is aiding a rise in pupils' achievements. Governors are now more able to tap into and use the emerging information to gauge the school's effectiveness whilst challenging senior leaders to improve further.

Pupils in Years 1 to 6 can explain how targets help them improve their work. This is a marked improvement since the last inspection. Targets are set both for individuals and small groups of pupils. These group targets often increase pupils' motivation to work together because, as one pupil said, 'If we achieve it first, we can help our friends.' Pupils are keenly aware of how to reach high levels, such as by using more interesting words in their creative writing. Their enthusiasm to improve is fostered well by targets displayed on classroom walls, and on simple prompt cards or check lists. For example, one pupil noticed his target was to check his writing himself. Although not relishing the task, he realised it would help improve the finished piece. Another knew he needed to write for various purposes, although not fully understanding this meant the same as different 'genres' described on his target sheet.

Better systems to assess pupils' progress, along with an increased proportion of good teaching, are benefitting other aspects of the school. As teachers are now more aware of individuals' progress, they are able to group accurately pupils of similar ability and provide work at the right level. This was evident in a mathematics lesson, for example, where pupils investigated the concept of probability. Well planned activities, set at three different levels, enabled pupils to make good progress. They quickly became aware how 'chance' can vary in everyday events or in activities such as flipping a coin. This better match of work to pupils' abilities is improving their rate of progress. The school's own checks are indicating that pupils in Year 6, for example, are on track to improve upon last year's results in national tests, particularly in mathematics.

The federation with another primary school nearby is bringing about joint improvements. The executive headteacher, who oversees both schools, is increasingly using strengths in each to share expertise and experience. The local authority has provided good support following the last inspection, not least in advising new staff, training governors and in supporting the new federation arrangements.

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

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge
Additional Inspector