

9 July 2008

Mr J McCaul  
Headteacher  
Our Lady and St Swithin's Catholic Primary School  
Parkstile Lane  
Croxteth  
Liverpool  
L11 0BQ

Dear Mr McCaul

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 9 July 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I would also like to thank the staff and pupils, who were particularly helpful.

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 July 2007, the school was asked to:

- ensure that planning and delivery of lessons meet the needs of all learners and particularly the most able
- implement a consistent approach to marking and academic guidance so that all pupils are fully aware of what they need to do in order to improve their work
- establish rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures that provide staff and governors with a more accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development.

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

Since the last inspection there has been an increased focus on matching work to individual pupils' needs. As a result, teachers are now much more adept at setting suitably challenging work for all pupils, especially the more able. In the majority of cases, planning identifies different tasks set for identified groups of pupils according to their ability. Particularly effective practice is evident in the Foundation Stage, where precise activities for individuals and groups are detailed in the planning. In Key Stage 2, mathematics is taught to pupils in sets of similar ability, and the impact of this is beginning to show in the improving achievement of all, but especially that of the most

able pupils. Increased resources in information and communication technology (ICT), including interactive whiteboards and new software, have helped teachers to tailor work more appropriately for pupils, ensuring that there is sufficient challenge for all. Staff confidence in the use of ICT has grown, and teachers are using the new resources to help them support the learning of individual pupils. Very high expectations are evident in the language support provided for pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. As a result, these pupils make rapid progress in acquiring language skills. The school has also begun to improve provision for gifted and talented pupils, initially through the appointment of a coordinator who has responsibility for ensuring that suitable activities are provided for such pupils. Although it is too soon to evaluate the impact of this work, early signs are encouraging.

The majority of staff are now giving more detailed feedback to pupils. The most effective examples of marking include constructive and encouraging comments, with very specific guidance on the extent to which targets have been met, and exactly how work can be improved. Although this represents a significant improvement, the very best practice is not yet evident in all classes, with a minority of marking being too brief and insufficiently focused. Systems for tracking pupils' progress are now better established, and most staff use this information more effectively in order to plan activities at an appropriate level. New systems for checking on the progress of pupils with learning difficulties are also proving successful, as these help teachers to identify specific areas of potential underachievement. As a result, focused support can be provided quickly in order to address these issues. Teachers are becoming more skilled in the use of data. Developments in the quality of teaching, assessment and academic guidance are improving pupils' achievement. Data from 2007 indicated that the school had started to recover from the downturn in standards evident in 2006. Data provided by the school indicate that it is on course to meet its targets for 2008, and there are signs of an upward trend.

Senior managers are now more actively involved in monitoring the quality of the school's work, through lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' books. Feedback is provided to all staff to help improve teaching. Senior and middle leaders are now required to report on progress termly to governors linked to their particular area of responsibility. Managers feel that they have increased accountability. As a result of this work, school managers and governors now have a more accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. For example, they are aware that the very best practice in planning and marking has not yet been adopted by all, and are putting measures in place to address this. Overall, self-evaluation is more effective, and the school is well placed to build on the improvements made in the past year.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julie Price".

Additional Inspector