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Mr Mark Rogan
Headteacher
St Mary's Catholic Primary School
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Lancashire
FY7 6EU

Dear Mr Rogan

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 1 December 2009, for the time you gave to our discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to the pupils, the chair of governors and the local authority representative for providing me with useful information.

As a result of the inspection on 21 and 22 October 2008, the school was asked to:

- Establish a sustained improvement in standards through effective monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- Ensure that the curriculum matches the full range of learners' aspirations and capabilities.
- Provide an outdoor provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage which meets requirements for children in Reception in all six areas of learning.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

End of Key Stage 2 unvalidated results for 2009 show that standards in English, mathematics and science are still well below those found nationally. In Key Stage 1 results were all below those achieved nationally with few attaining the higher levels. The school has worked consistently to eradicate this legacy of underachievement. Evidence from the monitoring visit, scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's own data indicates that there are signs that these weaknesses are being tackled successfully. Progress for pupils is now improving although attainment in upper Key Stage 2 classes is more accelerated due to the high quality of teaching.

Senior leaders now monitor and evaluate the quality teaching and learning more closely so that there is an increased level of accountability. However, some of the systems employed are not formalised and the level of rigour can mask some rates of underachievement. The school have plans in train to strengthen these procedures to identify where added support is needed in individual classrooms. Strategies to provide pupils with feedback on how to improve their work are proving successful. As a result, marking more consistently refers pupils to their targets and, increasingly, older pupils know their targets and understand what they need to do to improve their work.

The curriculum has undergone several changes since the last inspection. Despite trialling some initiatives the school, as yet, have not found one totally suitable to meet their needs. Pupils enjoy the creative elements which the revised curriculum provides, such as the introduction of modern foreign languages. The development of strong, cross-curricular links designed to match the full range of learners' aspirations and capabilities are not yet fully in place. The school is at the early stages of fully evaluating the impact of curriculum changes linked to outcomes to pupils. The school recognises the importance of incorporating their plans and evaluations in to the overall school development plan.

Improvements to the planning and implementation of the Early Years curriculum are proceeding well, although the provision to develop outdoor learning has stalled. This has been due to a combination of planning difficulties and delays to some structural alterations required to ensure the safety and well-being of the pupils. Whilst the Early Years Foundation Stage leader has enhanced outdoor provision there is still some way to go to fully achieve the exciting and stimulating structural alterations planned.

The addition of a recently appointed deputy headteacher has strengthened the leadership team. Together with the headteacher, he has a keen eye for the main issues to be resolved and the team are becoming more adept at identifying priorities and action planning. Currently, the school development plan does not sufficiently identify in detail how evaluations will be conducted. Equally, the success criteria are not consistently linked to measurable outcomes for pupils. Although the school has valuable data on pupils' performance this information is not consistently incorporated in to action planning as a means of gauging success.

The local authority provides effective support and challenge. The school have retained the principles of the intensifying support programme (ISP). This methodology is proving valuable for staff in identifying areas of underperformance by pupils. The School Improvement Partner has correctly identified the areas of weakness in performance and, with local authority support, is guiding the school as to how they can improve further.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James Kilner
Her Majesty's Inspector