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29 January 2010

Mrs D Albon  
Headteacher  
St Gregory's Catholic Primary School  
Sandy Lane  
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Dear Mrs Albon

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 27 and 28 January 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I would be grateful if you could pass on my thanks to the Chair of Governors, the School Improvement Partner, staff, pupils, and parents and carers with whom I met.

Since the inspection in April 2008 a new deputy has been appointed and three new members of staff have joined the school.

As a result of the inspection on 08 and 09 April 2009, the school was asked to accelerate progress and raise standards in mathematics in Key Stage 2, especially for the higher achieving pupils, increase the proportion of teaching which is good or better and ensure that marking of pupils' work gives clear guidance to pupils of how to improve. The school was also asked to make more effective use of assessment information to match work to pupils' learning and to set targets for school improvement.

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

The school has made outstanding progress in raising standards in Key Stage 2 and in accelerating the progress that pupils make in mathematics. Results have improved strongly and in the most recent national assessments in 2009 they were significantly above average. All pupils achieved the expected Level 4 and three quarters achieved the higher Level 5 in this subject. The progress made by pupils in mathematics by the end of their time in Key Stage 2 also improved strongly and was well above average. More-able pupils made good progress and some made very good progress.

September 2009



The progress made by pupils in lessons in mathematics observed during the visit was good overall. Attainment at Key Stage 1 also improved in mathematics and was just above average.

Since the previous inspection the school has focused sharply on improvements in mathematics. Training has been held on developing teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics and extra teaching resources have been purchased. A new calculations policy has been introduced and a meeting held for parents and carers to explain its use. A daily session to improve pupils' mental mathematical skills has been introduced in classes in Key Stages 1 and 2. An additional teaching assistant has been employed with the specific responsibility to support more-able learners in upper Key Stage 2. Useful 'mathematical scrapbooks' have been introduced which enable teachers to provide pupils with a good level of written feedback about their work in mathematics. Better use of data by teachers has meant that intervention strategies are targeted more accurately. Additional classes in mathematics have also been held for pupils in Year 6 outside of the school day and arrangements made to enable a number of pupils to attend a Saturday mathematics club funded by the local authority.

Good progress has been made in increasing the proportion of teaching which is good or better. In the large majority of lessons observed during the monitoring visit teaching was good and occasionally outstanding. Since the last inspection a number of weaknesses in teaching have been tackled and the headteacher has thoughtfully redeployed staff to make the most of their teaching strengths. The school has also used support from the local authority and other consultants well to provide training to improve teachers' skills, in areas such as planning, marking and assessment. Staff have willingly taken innovations and guidance on board. Teachers' planning is more effectively informed by data. Lessons are regularly monitored by senior staff, sometimes in collaboration with local authority officers, and staff receive detailed feedback. Some monitoring focuses on checking the effectiveness of innovations in classroom practice, such as assessment procedures. Newly appointed staff have opportunities to observe good practice both within the school and at other schools. The school has usefully reviewed its use of additional adults and, following training, they are now much more effectively deployed.

The school has also made good progress in ensuring that marking gives pupils clear guidance on how they can improve their work. Guidance sheets, placed in the front of pupils' books, indicate clearly to pupils the next steps they must take to move from one sub-level of a core subject to the next. Targets are regularly reviewed with pupils. A new assessment and marking policy has been introduced and useful guidance drawn up on how this should be applied. However, this is not always followed consistently. There is a greater level of useful written commentary by teachers in pupils' books which assesses the quality of their work and points out the next step they should take. This is more developed in some classes than in others. Teachers also make more use of displays and interactive whiteboards to remind pupils what they must do in order to achieve their targets.

Good progress has been made in using assessment information to match work to pupils' learning and to set targets for school improvement. The school's leaders have successfully emphasised to staff the importance of the analytical use of data. This has raised expectations among teachers of what pupils can achieve and of the progress they should make. Pupils are assessed each term in the core subjects and a tracking system now identifies those who are not making the expected progress. Regular meetings are held between senior leaders and staff where the progress of pupils is discussed. This has led to a higher degree of accountability among staff. Teachers maintain comprehensive data files of their classes and this information is used to plan how pupils are grouped and to match work more closely to their different abilities. This more rigorous use of data has led the school to revise its whole-school targets so that they are appropriately challenging. However, there is scope for the governing body to be more involved in the target-setting process.

The local authority and the School Improvement Partner have provided good support for the school. Specific training on areas for improvement identified by the last inspection has been provided by consultants from the local authority who have also worked alongside individual teachers when required. The local authority suitably reduced its support as the school increased its own capacity to improve. The school's resolute and successful focus on each of the areas identified for improvement by the previous inspection show that it has made good progress in developing its capacity to improve.

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

Michael McIlroy  
Her Majesty's Inspector