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Mrs M O'Friel
St Patrick's Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs O'Friel

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 24 February 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit. I would also like to thank the Chair of Governors and the pupils for the contribution they made to the inspection.

Since the previous inspection, the school has entered into a 'permanent collaboration' with St Edmund's Catholic Primary School, a sister school within the Parish. The acting headteacher at the previous inspection is now executive head of both schools. Each has a full-time head of school. There are two separate governing bodies, but a joint committee consisting of senior leaders and three governors from each school advises the full governing bodies on strategic planning. There has been some site development. There is a new outdoor learning area for Early Years Foundation Stage children and Key Stage 1 pupils benefit from additional playground facilities.

As a result of the inspection on 30 June and 1 July 2009, the school was asked to:

- raise standards in literacy and numeracy by providing sufficient opportunities to use and practice skills across the curriculum
- increase the proportion of good teaching by ensuring that pupils' differing needs are met consistently well and marking is used to help pupils understand how to improve their work
- enable all leaders to evaluate information on provision and pupils' progress so they can set challenging targets and challenge underachievement swiftly.

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



The school has made satisfactory progress in raising standards. Test results at the end of Year 6 declined steadily in English, mathematics and science between 2006 and 2008 when they were exceptionally low in all three subjects. In 2009, test results were below average in English, mathematics and science but showed significant improvement over previous years. Improvement is being sustained in the current Year 6 and detailed and regular assessments confirm this. Attainment in reading, writing and in mathematics at the end of Year 2 was still in decline and well below average in 2009. Improving standards are now evident at Key Stage 1 because better teaching is accelerating pupils' progress. A greater proportion of pupils is expected to reach age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of this year.

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Starting from a very low level, they join Year 1 with below average attainment. Assessment information shows satisfactory progress from starting points on entry to Year 1. There is no indication of any inadequate progress. Progress is accelerating and a scrutiny of work from each class clearly shows that it is at least satisfactory and good in some classes. This better progress, however, has not yet shown sustained improvement in end of key stage tests.

Following the previous inspection the governing body acted decisively. A new, and increasingly effective, structure of leadership has emerged. Each school has a head of school who works closely with the executive head in raising the levels in teaching and learning and achievement and progress. Development of the leadership structure is ongoing and the next steps are well thought through. Phase leaders with responsibility for raising standards and maintaining improvement in provision are soon to take up their roles.

Senior leaders have set about raising the quality of teaching through robust monitoring. Through rigorous evaluation of assessment data, they hold teachers to account for the progress of each pupil. Regular lesson observations provide teachers with accurate feedback, which is taken seriously and acted upon to improve performance. Monitoring records show that teaching is improving. There is now no inadequate teaching and the proportion of good teaching is rising, although still short of the school's target of 75% good or better. A new marking policy has been introduced, which is used consistently across the school. It is simple to use by teachers, easily understood by pupils and is effective in helping pupils to understand how to improve their work. Comments in pupils' work books are generally helpful, with some excellent practice in Year 5. Work is generally matched well to pupils needs, but often there is insufficient difference in the task level set for average attaining pupils and those capable of harder work. The level of challenge for higher attaining pupils is not sufficient.

The local authority's statement of action is good and its support for the school is effective. Local authority consultants have helped to raise the quality of teaching and the school improvement partner supports and challenges the school well.



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

David Speakman

Additional Inspector