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Friday 12 March 2010

Mr Nathan Price
St Wulstan's Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mr Price

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Wulstan's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on Wednesday 10 March 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

Newly Qualified Teachers may not be appointed

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the diocese of Birmingham, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

Rashida Sharif
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of St Wulstan's Catholic Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on Wednesday 10 March 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at teaching in every class. Two joint observations were undertaken with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents and met with the headteacher, other members of the senior leadership team, a representative from the governing body and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors also met with groups of pupils and parents.

Context

There has been no significant change to staffing. A new leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage is in post. However, there has been some change to the staffing structures for middle leaders since the inspection in October 2009.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning
Lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils work show that attainment, as at the time of the last inspection, is average and progress satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities continue to make satisfactory progress from their starting point, as do those who are more able.

The school's introduction of a new tracking system has simplified its ability to track pupils' progress and to identify those in need of further support. However this work is not fully developed at a whole school level to include more groups and detailed analysis of any trends. This system is recent and the data is not robust enough, for the full impact to be seen. Teachers have recently received assessment files containing relevant data and information on the individual pupils. However, this information is not yet used effectively and consistently by all teachers to meet the needs of individual pupils.

The appointment of a new leader for literacy and the recently clarified roles and responsibilities of other middle leaders have not yet had sufficient impact to strengthen curriculum planning, teaching and assessment.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils show a positive attitude to learning and behave well in lessons that engage them. They relate well to each other and to adults and behave well around the school and in most lessons. Pupils told the inspectors that behaviour had improved since the last inspection. They attribute this to changes to the behaviour code which they have welcomed. However some of the pupils continue to feel that those who are disruptive in some lessons are not reprimanded. Pupils acknowledge that they need to reflect on their own behaviour and to explain how they will change it when they fall short of the school's expectations. There have been no exclusions in the last year. Bullying is now rare, but pupils report some name-calling does occur and some



have confidence in staff that this is dealt with promptly. The school's programme of personal, social and healthy education is currently being reviewed so that further help can be given to pupils to value and form better relationships with their peers and to develop more independent skills. In lessons, most pupils are keen to learn and older pupils, in particular, help younger pupils in class, during playtime and lunchtime as prefects and buddies.

Pupil's spiritual, moral and social awareness remains satisfactory. However the school has yet to respond to developing pupils' knowledge of other cultures and beliefs. Although pupils say behaviour has improved since the last inspection some still do not feel confident that any worries or troubles they may have will be dealt with effectively by adults. This, they feel, is because some staff are not always sensitive to their needs and a small number report that they still feel they are not always treated fairly. Consequently there are still pupils who do not always enjoy their learning.

The effectiveness of provision

Teaching quality varies considerably, as it did at the last inspection; some is good, but some remains inadequate. The impact of this variation results in pupils' uneven progress from year to year as well as between those of different abilities. One of the strong features in most lessons is the positive learning environment that most teachers create, through, for example, their use of praise and expectations of behaviour. Relationships are generally positive and pupils are managed well so that in the great majority of lessons little time is lost in dealing with inappropriate behaviour or inattention. Lesson planning is mainly guided by learning objectives which are shared with pupils in most lessons; less secure is their understanding of 'steps to success'. Inconsistencies also exist in the use by teachers of assessment data to plan appropriately challenging work for pupils of different abilities. Whilst some teachers have a clear understanding of how to use this information, others identify different tasks for pupils to complete rather than use assessment information to identify tasks to match these tasks to the different learning needs of pupils. Consequently, the needs of the more able are not always fully met and their progress slows.

Good use is now being made of interactive whiteboards (IWB) to illustrate and enliven class discussions by some teachers. The use of IWBs is not, consistent in all lessons, which has an adverse effect on the quality of learning and limits pupils' enjoyment. In the better teaching, pupils are encouraged to discuss with partners to help them to express their ideas and to work independently.

Marking of pupils' books is now carried out regularly and is supportive of the pupils' efforts. The use of stickers to acknowledge achievement is popular with many pupils, although some feel that some of the same stickers are overused and that they do not always help them move forward. There are some weaknesses in teachers' marking. There are few references to whether pupils are meeting their individual



targets. There is also lack of consistent guidance on how pupils can further improve their work.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching across the school - inadequate

The effectiveness of leadership and management

At the time of the last inspection, safeguarding was judged to be inadequate as the school's procedures did not meet the government's statutory requirements. Prompt and successful action was taken by the school to update the school's single central record to be in line with government requirements and provide all adults with the required training. Both the head and deputy headteachers have received the relevant training and carry out the responsibility for child protection. Policy and procedures to promote the welfare and safety of pupils have been developed and are now in place. Senior leaders and the governing body are fully aware of the importance of these revised documents in driving forward effective safeguarding as well as the need to see that these are implemented. The school now provides adequate and robust risk assessments which have recently been updated including providing supervision of pupils before and after school activities. However, the school recognises that managing pupil's behaviour consistently and fairly; recording any incidents accurately still requires further work.

Although the school has introduced a systematic approach to monitoring the work it is doing, its work in evaluating the impact remains weak. The leadership has not yet set a clear direction for the school to ensure it focuses on the overall achievement that pupils make and further improves the quality of teaching and learning. It has started to strengthen the role of all its leaders so that they are in a stronger position to hold staff accountable for pupils' progress.

The leadership and management team has responded well to the external support for monitoring teaching and learning. However, they recognise that they need to be more systematic in following up weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment. They also recognise that they need to further refine the tracking of pupils' progress to determine the progress made by different groups so that it better informs the action they need to take. They also recognise that the strategic planning needs to have specific, quantifiable and timed targets, so that progress towards them is measurable and can be reported accurately

A satisfactory range of policies are in place including those for disability and accessibility, equal opportunities and a gender equality scheme. The disability action plan is reviewed every three years, and outlines appropriate targets. However, this plan remains inadequate because the monitoring and analysis of the impact of this aspect of the school's work is insufficiently rigorous, and is not reported to stakeholders.



The governing body recognises the urgency of responding to the priorities identified by Ofsted in the last inspection and is now determined to address these successfully. Governors are supportive of the headteacher and are working closely with him and the local authority to ensure that they are better informed about the work of the school and more involved in providing the challenge it needs to improve. Governors recognise, however that they themselves need to develop their knowledge, skills and have greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet government requirements – satisfactory progress
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement – inadequate progress

External support

The local authority statement of action fulfils requirements. Following the inspection in October 2009, the local authority instigated a number of initiatives for support and intervention. The school values the ongoing support provided by the local authority, including its assistance in providing a programme of continuing professional development for its entire staff and particularly for the senior leadership team and the Early Years. Staff are enthusiastic and committed to engaging in the support on offer and the climate for change is beginning to take place. The local authority has established links with a partner school to act as a critical friend and to share good practice in leadership and management and assessing teaching and learning.

The local authority and the school are currently revising their action plans to ensure that these are much more focused and aligned with the school improvement plan including its view on the school successfully being taken out of special measures in July 2010.

Priorities for further improvement

- Address fully the priorities for improvement identified during the previous inspection.
- Eliminate inadequate teaching and ensure that it is consistently at least good or better.