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Mr Stephen Dent
St Patrick's Catholic Primary School
Whitehouse Road
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Dear Mr Dent

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

Following my visit to your school on 15 and 16 June 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

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 chair of governors, the Director of Children's Services for Nottinghamshire and the Dioceses of Hallam.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick
Her Majesty's Inspector



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

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 15 and 16 June 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, visited seven lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, teachers, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority.

Context

There have been no changes since the last monitoring visit.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

In the lessons observed, students made at least satisfactory progress and sometimes good progress. The school's increasingly reliable tracking data confirm this improvement. Better progress is most apparent in pupils' writing and mathematics. The progress made in improving reading has been more limited, and the school is now making this aspect a priority. The overall rate of improvement is not enough to overcome a legacy of previous underachievement. The increased use of drama and role play throughout Key Stage 2 is increasing pupils' enjoyment of learning. For instance, pupils enjoyed questioning a classmate in the role of Macbeth. Pupils are being presented with more challenging work and as a result more are exceeding their age-related expectations. High levels of adult support are ensuring pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make better progress than other groups. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are also making better progress, although this is a little uneven across the areas of learning.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise pupils' achievement by raising pupils' attainment and improving progress in reading, writing and mathematics, especially in Key Stage 2 and for more able pupils – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Behaviour is good and there are increasing signs that pupils in the lower junior class are developing more positive attitudes to learning. Pupils continue to adopt a commendable safety-first approach when using equipment. They expressed a strong desire to have further opportunities to influence decision-making in the school, particularly related to improving the range of activities available at lunchtime. Pupils'



cultural awareness has been enhanced through a recent focus on India that actively involved parents.

The effectiveness of provision

Teaching and the use of assessment continue to improve. Teachers are using praise more effectively because more precise reasons are given for the positive comments made. In English and mathematics, pupils regularly have the opportunity to undertake work directed towards particular ability groups. For instance, the more-able pupils in the lower junior class really enjoyed the challenging 'Mission Impossible' task that required them to plan, independently, an escape using travel timetables, some of which they found on the internet. Pupils in Key Stage 1 worked particularly well on their different tasks largely because of the very effective way in which their endeavours were recognised by the teacher. Pupils took enormous pride in the amount they managed to cover because of the points they were awarded at the end of the lesson. Where groups of pupils undertook different tasks, this was most effective when there was a common starting point. In one lesson, for example, a group of able pupils found it difficult to concentrate on their task because they wanted to participate in the introduction being provided for the other groups.

The school has successfully focussed on improving the reviewing of learning, particularly at the end of lessons. Lessons often finished strongly because learning was reinforced by providing opportunities for pupils to apply their learning. In several lessons, the needs of the full ability range were more effectively met because pupils chose problems at three different levels. In one lesson this was very usefully extended further, with pupils identifying what they needed to do in future lessons to be even more successful.

In the most effective lessons, teachers avoid over-long introductions and seek to involve pupils actively at the earliest opportunity. Pupils may make mistakes or flounder for a short while but teachers use regular reviews to maximise the learning from such experiences. These reviews peppered throughout a lesson were an important factor in ensuring better levels of pupils' engagement in learning. This approach was far more effective than the alternative, which involved over-long introductions that resulted in pupils becoming frustrated at their lack of active involvement. The very good practice of using success criteria to involve pupils actively in identifying what they must do to be successful has not yet spread throughout the school.

The use of questioning is variable. In the good lessons teachers intuitively ask a range of questions that encourage different types of thinking. These teachers use a range of approaches to maximise the value of the questions. For instance, questions are targeted at particular groups, or pupils discuss in pairs, so all have to consider important ideas. Where teaching is less effective, there is an insufficient range of questions and often teachers do not ensure all pupils engage sufficiently. Answers



tend to be accepted from the same willing volunteers. At times, less-able students struggle to answer more challenging questions because there is not the time for teaching assistants to offer assistance and prompts of various kinds, for example pictures, are not provided. Pupils, particularly the more able, are not consistently asked questions that require them to apply their learning, think critically or explain using the correct technical vocabulary. Very little evidence was found of pupils being able to omit questions and concentrate on those they found challenging, particularly in mathematics.

In the Early Years Foundation stage, there are strengths in teaching that are enabling pupils to progress well in their language and mathematical development. However, the learning environment is not as conducive to the creative and cultural aspects of learning.

Marking has improved with most staff providing positive feedback and targets for improvement. As a result, the quality of work in pupils' books has improved. Self and peer assessment is developing, although opportunities are missed to aid the development of independent working by highlighting assessment criteria. Limited progress has been made to improve the curriculum, although plans are in hand. The school's focus on reading planned for September is well timed to coincide with implementation of a changed curriculum.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that the majority of teaching is good or better and, as a matter of urgency, ensuring that all inadequate teaching is eliminated – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leadership and management continue to improve. Governors are clear about the schools' strengths and weaknesses. They are also taking steps to ensure they are actively involved in holding the school's leadership to account. The school has made further progress in developing a reliable source of information about pupils' progress, and is using this evidence to monitor its effectiveness. For instance, meetings at which teachers are held to account for the progress their pupils make are becoming an established part of the way the school operates. The school is at an early stage of using this information to monitor the progress made by all groups, including that of the more able. A calendar of evaluation activity has been established and the school is beginning to use a range of evidence to determine the priorities for improvement. For instance, questioning has been identified as a suitable vehicle for making further improvements to the quality of teaching. The school is not yet sufficiently systematic in its approach to planning, monitoring and evaluating its work in order to ensure a faster rate of improvement. Documentation in this regard lacks rigour.



Opportunities are growing for middle leaders to be involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. Several are well respected because they lead well by example and are keen to participate in school improvement. For instance, the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage is very keen to visit other settings to aid the development of a vision for a high quality learning environment. The special educational needs coordinator is equally keen to extend her role so as to have a greater influence on the broader inclusion agenda. The Early Years Foundation Stage continues to meet statutory requirements.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that leaders and managers at all levels monitor and evaluate the work of the school more rigorously and ensure that the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage meets statutory requirements - satisfactory.

External support

Staff spoke positively about the quality of literacy support they have received this term. The recent external review usefully highlighted the need to take a longer-term view of the improvements needed. The support provided by another local Catholic primary school is helping to plan changes to the curriculum and in better using the pupil voice. Other support provided by the school's adviser and the School Improvement Partner has had a satisfactory impact on developing capacity at governor and headship levels.