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Mrs C Quinn
Headteacher
St Margaret's Catholic Primary
Glossop Road
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Dear Mrs Quinn

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Margaret's Catholic Primary School.

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 July 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to your School Improvement Partner, the coordinator for information and communication technology (ICT) and the Early Years Foundation Stage, other staff and pupils.

Since the last inspection, one teacher has left the school. Because of the fall in the number of pupils on roll, the governing body took the decision not to appoint a replacement and to increase the teaching commitment of the headteacher to five half-days each week.

As a result of the inspection on 11–12 November 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter. 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.

Since the last inspection, pupils' attainment has improved. Although at the end of Year 6 in 2010 it remained close to average, the 2011 test results show significant improvement. All pupils attained the expected level in reading and mathematics, and many exceeded it in both subjects. However, no pupils attained the higher Level 5 in writing. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has also improved. From well-below average in 2009, attainment rose to close to average in 2010. In 2011 it was even higher, especially in reading and mathematics.



Analysis of the school's tracking information shows that the progress of all groups of pupils throughout the school is accelerating rapidly. Nearly all pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress and, in some classes, pupils' progress is good and, occasionally, outstanding. Pupils' progress in writing, especially the boys', is slower than in reading and mathematics.

The school's monitoring shows that the quality of teaching and learning has improved considerably. Pupils agree and say that lessons are calmer and more enjoyable. Lesson observations carried out during the monitoring inspection show that, in most lessons, teachers focus pupils' attention sharply on the intended learning outcomes and lessons are moved on with good pace. Where this occurs, pupils behave well and show positive attitudes to their learning. Occasionally, and especially in writing lessons, pupils' learning is not focused sharply enough, teachers talk for too long and the pace of learning slows. Where this occurs, some pupils, especially boys, begin to lose interest. Teachers plan how to meet the needs of pupils of different levels of attainment and, in most lessons, pupils are challenged well, especially in reading and mathematics. However, the work given to pupils in writing, especially the more-able, sometimes lacks sufficient challenge and does not effectively build on pupils' prior knowledge and skills.

ICT is now used much more consistently to support pupils' learning. All pupils have timetabled lessons where they develop their ICT skills. In addition, teachers plan ICT activities in many subjects and track pupils' progress in ICT through regular assessment and recording of their levels of attainment. ICT is used in subjects such as history to research information and make presentations to an audience, physical education to show skills and activities, and art to exemplify the work of artists such as Andy Warhol.

An increasing number of links with school communities beyond the immediate locality are beginning to have a positive impact on extending pupils' cultural awareness. Pupils from another school recently visited and took part in 'international week' where pupils worked together studying the traditions, languages and cultures of a variety of countries. Visits to places such as Manchester Jewish museum help develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the diversity of faiths and cultures in the United Kingdom. Following staff training, the school achieved the foundation level of the International School Award, and is now actively seeking links with communities in different parts of the world.

Teachers' planning and lesson observations show that the outdoor area in the Early Years Foundation Stage is now used well to support the classroom learning. Basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are practised and extended through a variety of planned outdoor activities. However, despite extensive school grounds which are used by pupils of all ages to promote learning, the Early Years Foundation Stage outdoor area is small, uncovered and not well designed, and does not allow children the freedom to experience a full range of activities. The school is aware of this and has plans to redesign and improve all aspects.

The headteacher has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Joint observations carried out during the monitoring inspection show that her judgements of the quality of teaching are accurate. Subject leaders are beginning to develop their leadership skills and are keen to support the headteacher's clearly communicated vision for improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Roy Bowers
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 11-12 November 2009

- Raise standards throughout the school by:
 - increasing the proportion of teaching which is good or better through consistent pace and challenge
 - ensuring information and communication technology (ICT) is used consistently throughout the curriculum to support learning.
- Improve the opportunities to extend pupils' cultural development by increasing links with communities beyond the immediate locality.
- Ensure better assessment of pupils' ICT work.
- Improve the effective use of the outdoor area in the Early Years Foundation Stage by linking the learning there to that carried out in the classroom.