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14 July 2011

Mr G Kelly  
Headteacher  
St Patrick's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School  
Smith Street  
Ryhope  
Sunderland  
Tyne and Wear  
SR2 0RQ

Dear Mr Kelly,

### **Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of St Patrick's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 July 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please also thank the School Improvement Partner, teachers and pupils who gave up their time to talk with me.

Since the previous inspection, one supply teacher has left the school and been replaced by a substantive experienced teacher in Key Stage 1. Senior leaders have revised their roles and responsibilities which include: the leadership of special educational needs and/or disabilities, literacy, numeracy and assessment. During the inspection, the Reception class was attending an educational visit to the seaside.

As a result of the inspection on 8 and 9 December 2010, 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 is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The school has responded positively to the issues identified at its inspection in December 2010. The headteacher, who was newly appointed at the time of the last inspection, has taken decisive action and formed a leadership team who are developing their management skills well and are working together to embed new systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. They are new to some of the responsibilities they have taken on but have embraced local and national professional development to increase their skills further. The senior leaders regularly carry out monitoring of: teaching and learning in classrooms; pupils' progress against age-related expectations and the work in pupils' books, and as a consequence, teaching is improving and progress is accelerating in reading, writing and mathematics in most classes for identified groups of underachieving pupils. The new tracking systems are well embedded into practice and understood by all staff who are fully

January 2011



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

involved in termly pupil progress meetings where they are held to account for the progress of groups and individuals within their classes. Staff say they feel effectively supported and challenged and staff and pupils' morale is high.

Senior leaders have improved the confidence of, and communication with, parents and carers through drop in meetings and regular newsletters. A new system of behaviour management is in place with clear rewards and consequences understood by all pupils. Pupils say that they enjoy the rewards and understand what is meant by good behaviour. Relationships in and around the school have improved significantly and behaviour and pupils' attitudes to learning are better, especially in Key Stage 1.

Teachers are planning lessons which are a closer match to pupils' abilities. The data that teachers are collecting, through accurate assessment of what pupils can do, are helping them to identify which pupils need extra support or challenge. This is leading to targeted intervention and extra support which is accelerating progress for these identified groups. However, this has not had time to have a full impact on the years of underachievement in most year groups; or the end of 2011 unvalidated Key Stage 2 test results, which improved to above national expectations in English but dipped in mathematics. In the end of Key Stage 1 assessments in 2011, attainment dipped in reading, writing and mathematics but the gap between boys' and girls' attainment is closing. While this does not appear to be a rosy picture these assessments are more accurate than in the past and have been rigorously moderated by the school and the local authority.

In lessons observed, pupils were eager to learn and take part. There were more planned opportunities for pupils to reason, solve problems and explain their thinking in Key Stage 1. Pupils worked on the tasks set for them and they were eager to do their best. The lessons observed during the inspection were at least satisfactory and it was evident that recent professional development is beginning to have an impact on learning. Pupils were engaged in talking to their peers about their work and teachers gave clear instructions about what they were going to learn resulting in pupils having a clear understanding of the tasks. The pace of lessons has improved with shorter introductions and a mini plenary taking place so that pupils are fully engaged for the whole lesson. In a Key Stage 1 writing lesson, pupils were using pictures of a recent visit from the school nurse to plan an account using appropriate time connectives. Pupils were excited to answer questions and able to use their previous knowledge to complete the task. However, in some lessons there were missed opportunities to challenge the most able pupils even further. Pupils say that lessons are 'more fun' and that they have improved since the previous inspection.

There has been slower progress in using information and communication technology (ICT) as a tool to support learning. Although all teachers now use interactive whiteboards competently, few pupils were observed using computers to enhance their work. Staff have engaged in recent professional development to improve the marking of pupils' work and books show that this has improved feedback to pupils and is starting to show pupils the next steps in their learning. More still needs to be done to ensure that pupils have opportunities to respond to these good comments and edit and improve their work. Senior leaders are in

the process of revising the curriculum to improve pupils' engagement and enjoyment. All staff have visited a local school to look closely at curriculum mapping and a new curriculum is planned for September.

The governing body has formed a monitoring committee which meets half termly. The members of which have received training about how to challenge the headteacher. They have brokered the support of an experienced local headteacher who attends all meetings and is helping the governing body to ask the right questions and request the evidence they need to be fully informed about pupils' progress. Minutes show that the governing body have improved their capacity to monitor the progress the school is making against the areas for improvement.

The school is working very closely with the local authority which has provided robust support and intervention. The local authority's statement of action was judged to meet requirements and has been used as a driver for improvement by the school. The School Improvement Partner has brokered appropriate support for the school and has robustly monitored its progress. The support offered through consultant teachers has been targeted to develop the areas of highest need but all teachers have received support and coaching to improve their practice. Good links have been established with other local schools to support the headteacher and senior leaders and most teachers have had opportunities to visit other schools and observe good practice in teaching and learning.

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,

Mrs Joy Frost  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 08 Dec 2010**

- Eliminate inadequate teaching and learning at Key Stage 1 and improve the quality of teaching across Years 1 to 6 by:
  - matching work more closely to pupils' learning needs
  - using a wider variety of resources and activities, particularly at Key Stage 1, to ensure that pupils are more actively engaged in their learning
  - ensuring that the pace of learning is quick enough in all lessons
  - ensuring that teachers' expectations of work and behaviour are equally high and that behaviour, particularly at Key Stage 1, is managed consistently well in all lessons
  - increasing the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to engage pupils' interest and support their learning
  - spreading the best practice in teaching across the school.
  
- Ensure that the achievement and progress of pupils in Key Stage 1 are at least satisfactory, and rates of progress for all pupils in Years 1 to 6 accelerate by:
  - embedding and monitoring the effectiveness of new systems to regularly and consistently assess the quality of pupils' work and to track their progress.