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Mrs M O'Friel
Executive headteacher
St Patrick's Catholic Primary School
Dudley Road
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Dear Mrs O'Friel

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 28 September 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, staff, the Chair of the Executive Board and the representative of the local authority.

Since the previous inspection, the school has undergone considerable changes. The school has formally entered into a 'hard federation' with a local primary school. The executive headteacher from this school now formally oversees both schools. The governing body was formally replaced with an executive board in April 2011 and is now responsible for both schools.

As a result of the inspection on 15 July 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 has made inadequate progress in making improvements and inadequate progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement. The inspection has raised very serious concerns. These will be considered by the appropriate Regional Director, Inspection Delivery, who will decide when the school will next be inspected.

Levels of attainment and outcomes for pupils have deteriorated since the school was last inspected. In 2011, pupils at the end of Year 6 attained levels in English and mathematics that were significantly below national averages with too few attaining higher levels. Current levels of attainment, though beginning to improve, remain below age-related expectations for many pupils across the school, particularly at the end of Key Stage 2. Boys are not always provided with visual stimuli to encourage their writing. Despite some recent improvements, they continue to underperform in English.

September 2010



Four out of the seven lessons observed jointly with the executive headteacher during the monitoring inspection were judged to be inadequate. Consequently, teaching is inadequate. Teachers' planning of lessons is too generalised; it does not include activities or strategies to meet the different needs of pupils. Pupils spend too long listening passively to explanations and instructions. As a result, they are not sufficiently engaged and too little time is left for pupils to complete work set for them. The pace of learning is too slow and pupils make insufficient progress. Additionally, teachers do not use questions and questioning techniques well enough to ensure that all pupils participate fully or are challenged. Pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to find things out for themselves nor are they told what National Curriculum level they are working on. The marking of pupils' work does not always inform them how well they are doing and what it is that they need to do to further improve their work. Pupils remain compliant and well-behaved in spite of teaching which is at times uninspiring. Relationships in most lessons are positive. Pupils show enthusiasm for work; they are eager to learn. However, pupils report that the school does not always take sufficient account of their views. Where teaching is most effective, for example in Reception, pupils are encouraged to use their own initiative; they are provided with a range of activities and are enabled to make choices. They are encouraged to use resources which enable them to reinforce their knowledge of letters and sounds. During the plenary of a satisfactory English lesson in Year 2, pupils reviewed their work. This enabled the teacher to assess the progress that pupils had made, the accuracy and use of punctuation and their use of adjectives and connectives in sentences. As a result, pupils were excited about their learning, remained on task and progressed well.

The executive headteacher has worked diligently to review and reorganise the curriculum. Consequently, there are more opportunities for writing across the curriculum. Links between some subjects have been identified and the programme of work uses a thematic approach. However, leaders and managers have not evaluated the impact of the revised curriculum. Consequently, they have yet to determine the extent to which it is helping to bring about improvements, particularly in literacy across the school which remains a concern. Some pupils report that story writing has become more interesting, especially when their work is linked to what they learn in other subjects. An example of this was seen in Year 6, with pupils developing their writing skills while drafting stories about Moses and his feelings using interesting words which they looked up in the *Thesaurus*. This was linked to their work in religious education.

The executive headteacher has developed systems for presenting and analysing assessment information about pupils. Appropriate use is made of this information to recognise and target underperformance. A number of pupils commented on the 'special' one-to-one tuition they receive during lunch time and after school which has helped them to do better. However, this information is not used effectively by teachers to plan their lessons or to set challenging targets for different groups of

pupils. Consequently, it is not contributing to raising levels of pupils' overall attainment. Furthermore, where evaluations of activities take place, these do not include sufficient reference to progress or levels of attainment.

Members of the newly formed executive board are beginning to ask more questions about the progress being made by groups of pupils but their work, as well as those of senior leaders and managers in the school, has yet to help bring about sufficient improvement. The school continues to ensure that the health and safety of pupils is a high priority and safeguarding procedures fully meet regulatory requirements.

The quality and impact of external support is satisfactory. There has been some effective support for English. This is leading to the improvements made in this subject, particularly in Key Stage 1. The local authority has identified the school as causing concern and plans to provide additional support as soon as possible to help staff to raise pupils overall attainment.

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

Rashida Sharif
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in July 2010

- Improve the quality of teaching further by:
 - ensuring assessment information is used effectively to pitch the work at the correct level for all pupils
 - ensuring learning objectives are written in language that is easily understood by pupils
 - providing sufficient time in lessons for pupils to be actively engaged in their learning rather than listening for too long to explanations and instructions
 - providing pupils with opportunities to find things out for themselves.

- Accelerate pupils' learning in writing by:
 - providing more opportunities for writing for a purpose and for cross-curricular writing
 - ensuring pupils have a clear understanding of what it is they have to do to reach the next National Curriculum level
 - providing boys with more visual stimuli to encourage their writing.