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27 November 2012

Mrs J. Jones  
Headteacher  
St Mary's Catholic Primary School  
Church Road  
Brighton  
BN1 1LB

Dear Mrs Jones

### **Requires improvement first monitoring inspection visit of St Mary's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 26 November, 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

This monitoring inspection visit was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with: you and members of your senior leadership team; the Chair of Governors and the local authority representative on the governing body; the diocesan representative supporting your school, together with two representatives from the local authority; and a group of pupils from Year 3 and Year 4. Minutes of governors' meetings, the school improvement plan and the action plan for the raising of achievement were evaluated, which included up-to-date analysis of pupils' standards and progress.

### **Context**

Few changes have been made since the last section 5 inspection. A new teacher has taken over the Year 3 class and the local authority representative supporting the school's overall progress has changed. Her predecessor is now providing specific guidance and support for the headteacher.

## **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

Significant changes were made to the school's leadership and management at the start of the school year; a new deputy headteacher and assessment co-ordinator have been appointed. The school's still-evolving development plan supports priorities identified by the recently restructured governing body and by the local authority, and that were highlighted at the recent inspection.

Your positive relationship with the diocese underpins the school's values, and your support for recent changes creates confidence. With vigorous and persuasive leadership from the acting deputy headteacher – described by pupils as 'awesome' – a system has been established that ensures all aspects of teaching and learning are closely monitored, more challenging targets set and governors actively involved as well-informed 'critical friends'. The Chair of Governors, for example, is part of the language team, focusing on English, modern foreign languages, reading, writing, spelling, handwriting, speaking and listening. Members of the senior leadership team demonstrate that changes to what is taught and how it is taught are practical and productive; they model good teaching and manage pupils' effectively without being heavy-handed. The impact on pupils' standards and progress has yet to be seen but staff morale has been re-invigorated.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to ensure that:

- close and regularly updated analysis of pupils' progress is used in the planning of lessons, so that the needs of all are met
- feedback to teachers is detailed and practical and sets priorities for further training or support, and that action points are always followed up to check that improvements are being sustained
- leaders and managers at all levels set challenging targets for teachers and pupils and themselves model good practice.

## **External support**

The local authority provides regular and constructive monitoring and well-targeted support – for example, guidance on teaching and learning in English, and training for governors. Support from the diocese benefits from the extensive headship experience brought by the new diocesan representative. The diocese and local authority work well together in challenging and supporting the school.

Following the monitoring inspection visit the following judgement was made: taken with the plan for raising attainment, the school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

To strengthen the implementation of action points in the two plans, the likely pattern of further intervention will be:

- lesson observations and feedback to teachers
- contribution to staff training, with a particular focus on matching expectations and activities to pupils' differing abilities and ways of learning
- work with governors to ensure that they set challenging targets for teachers, based on accurate analysis of information about progress made by all pupils, including pupils eligible for additional government funding through the Pupil Premium.

I am copying this note of visit to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Brighton and Hove, and the Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**