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31 October 2007

Mr Philip Sell  
The Headteacher  
Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic Primary School  
Occupation Road  
Corby  
Northamptonshire  
NN17 1EE

Dear Mr Sell

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF OUR LADY OF  
WALSINGHAM CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit with Isobel Randall, Additional Inspector, to your school on 10 and 11 October 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in May 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Director of the Children and Young People's Service for Northamptonshire and the Director of education for the Catholic Diocese of Northampton.

Yours sincerely

Tim Bristow  
H M Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF OUR LADY OF WALSINGHAM CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 10 and 11 October 2007

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, groups of pupils, the chair of governors, a representative from the local authority (LA) and several subject coordinators.

### Context

Since the inspection in May 2007 the headteacher and two other teachers have resigned. The new headteacher has recently been appointed. There are now six classes because the number of pupils attending the school has fallen since the inspection.

### Achievement and standards

Achievement in the school remains inadequate because too many pupils, including the more able, have not made the expected progress. Standards attained by pupils by the time they reach Year 6 are below average.

Unvalidated assessment results for 2007 in Year 6 show that the progress pupils make is exceptionally slow and standards are below average overall. Standards in English were broadly average this year because more pupils achieved the expected level in writing. Standards in mathematics remain below average and in science they have dropped and are now below average. Results for pupils in Year 2 in 2007 were broadly average overall.

Progress overall has begun to accelerate because lessons are better taught than they were when the school was inspected. However, the school has not sufficiently exploited assessment information to improve progress. The school is using assessment procedures to enable teachers to develop a better understanding about the progress pupils should make. This information is being used to plan extra support for pupils who need it, but this has not been implemented and, consequently, has not yet improved their progress. Assessment information is not being used consistently to pitch work at the correct level for all pupils. In most lessons pupils often find the work too hard or too easy. In the few lessons where assessment information is used there are encouraging signs that pupils are making better progress.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2007:

- make more effective use of assessment information to increase the rate of pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6 and to raise standards particularly in English and mathematics – inadequate.

## Personal development and well-being

Pupils behave well, with positive attitudes to school. They enjoy lessons, like their teachers, and care well for each other. In class and at play their good cooperation is evident in the calm, friendly atmosphere. Bullying is rare and is swiftly dealt with when reported to teachers. Pupils are confident and happy to offer their views in class whilst listening well to the contributions of their friends. Although they have a few opportunities to support younger children, they are keen to take greater responsibility for the direction of the school through the revival of the school council. They are still not adequately prepared for secondary school because of continuing underdevelopment of their basic skills.

## Quality of provision

Teaching has begun to improve since the last inspection because of good support from the LA. Teachers are now aware of ways in which they can improve their teaching. In some lessons they are preparing activities that cater for the differing abilities of pupils in English and mathematics, but these are not always pitched accurately enough to challenge the more able pupils. In most classes pupils understand what they have to do, but where teaching remains inadequate pupils are confused by unclear instructions. In some lessons teachers ask sharply targeted questions demanding that pupils think about their answers, but there is still a preponderance of questions demanding only limited responses. Improved planning in English and mathematics has not yet spread to other subjects. The marking policy is applied inconsistently. Marking in some year groups in English gives good guidance on how to improve. In other subjects marking remains only an acknowledgement of work done. Some self-evaluation by pupils is beginning to appear but it does not always encourage them to reflect on what they have learned, only what they enjoyed.

The curriculum for English and mathematics has improved but activities to help different groups of pupils to make better progress have not yet begun. The curriculum for foundation subjects has yet to be addressed because the school has concentrated on improving English and mathematics. Staff care well for pupils' social needs. Although arrangements are in place to improve academic guidance, these have been inconsistently applied. Pupils' knowledge of how well pupils are doing and how they can improve is therefore limited both across year groups and over the range of subjects.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2007:

- ensure that teachers provide sufficient challenge for all pupils, especially the more able – inadequate.

## Leadership and management

School leaders are gradually improving provision. The headteacher has been in post for a very short period of time, but has quickly gained an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Staff morale is high and there is a shared determination to improve provision.

The subject leaders for English and mathematics have benefited from the input of LA consultants. They are beginning to develop leadership skills and are now more able to monitor and evaluate the work in their subjects. Some recommendations for improvements in provision have been made but have not been consistently applied, for example the marking policy. Monitoring and evaluation systems are not robust enough yet because coordinators are not measuring the impact of teaching on the rate of progress pupils are making. Other subject leaders have only had limited opportunities to take a more active role since the inspection.

School governance has strengthened since the inspection. With the support of the LA and the diocese, governors have managed staff changes during a turbulent period maintaining a full teaching and leadership team. They are now more knowledgeable about their role having embarked on staff training. A policy for performance management is now in place. However, procedures for managing the performance of teachers are not yet established. Some teachers do not yet have targets or guidance for improvements.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2007:

- strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that teaching and learning are monitored more effectively and by taking swift action to tackle underachievement – inadequate
- meet statutory requirements in providing teachers with targets and guidance on how they can improve – inadequate.

#### External support

The local authority's statement of action has identified key milestones, resources, and methods of measuring progress for all the areas for improvement. Insufficient progress has been made in reaching some of these milestones because of changes in the leadership of the school. The LA and diocese acted swiftly to support governors when they selected the new headteacher. The school recognises that the support provided by the LA since the last inspection has been good. Advisory staff have helped improve the teachers' practice and the work of subject leaders through additional training. The governing body has acted on advice and training it has received. The School Improvement Partner visits regularly and she has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Use the assessment information to plan lessons that are pitched at the correct level for all pupils.
- Monitor and evaluate the progress that pupils are making in lessons.
- Ensure that agreed changes to teaching are consistently applied.
- Establish performance management procedures.