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26 February 2008

Mr Philip Sell  
Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic Primary School  
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Dear Mr Sell

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

Following my visit with Rajinder Harrison, Additional Inspector, to your school on 12 and 13 February 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second 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.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

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 second monitoring inspection: 12 and 13 February 2008

### Evidence

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

### Context

The school continues to experience staffing instability. Since the first monitoring inspection three teachers have resigned and have been replaced by new appointments in January 2008. The school has appointed four teaching assistants, one of whom is a learning mentor and one who supports Polish pupils. School numbers have declined to 150.

### Achievement and standards

Since the first monitoring inspection the progress made by pupils has accelerated throughout the school in English and mathematics. This is because teaching is improving.

Children enter the Reception class with skills that broadly meet national expectations. Average standards are maintained in English and mathematics until Year 4, but they decline in Years 5 and 6. This is because of the inadequate teaching experienced by these pupils in the past. Progress in Years 5 and 6 has accelerated since the last monitoring visit, but this is unlikely to enable pupils in Year 6 to achieve the challenging targets set for them this year.

More able pupils are now making better progress than they were, but this is not rapid enough to ensure that they achieve the standards that they should. Assessment information is being used more effectively to identify groups of pupils who need extra support with English and mathematics and they are making satisfactory progress. This information is not yet being used sufficiently to accelerate the progress of the growing minority of pupils with English as an additional language.

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 – satisfactory.

### Personal development and well-being

Pupils report that they enjoy school and are keen to learn. They continue to behave well in lessons and settle to their tasks enthusiastically. The newly formed school council has made a good start speaking on behalf of others to discuss how they can

influence improvements. Pupils are particularly welcoming towards those who arrive at the school from other countries.

### Quality of provision

The school has improved teaching so that it is generally satisfactory. However, the school has not achieved its target for the proportion of lessons that are judged to be good.

Where teaching is good the pace is brisk and pupils understand what they have to do to achieve well. A range of activities and resources stimulate pupils' interest and teachers ask demanding questions to encourage pupils to think about their learning and offer their ideas.

Planning has improved, and there is a better attempt to match work to pupils' different abilities, but there is still a tendency to set pupils of all abilities the same task and, as a result, the more able are not challenged sufficiently. This is because the expectations of teachers are not yet high enough. In too many lessons the more able pupils report that they find the work too easy. In the same way, pupils who are new to learning English find it difficult to participate adequately in lessons where teachers have not taken their needs into account sufficiently.

The curriculum for English and mathematics is satisfactory and teachers are clearer about how to make the changes necessary to raise standards. Additional activities led by teaching assistants have been successful in ensuring that groups of pupils who need help with English and mathematics make satisfactory progress. There are some good opportunities being exploited by teachers to develop pupils' literacy skills in other subjects through, for example, writing in science and history.

Care arrangements are satisfactory and all the required procedures for health and safety are sound. Pupils feel they are well cared for and additional support is given to those with specific social and emotional needs. Marking has improved since the previous monitoring inspection and it is now giving pupils satisfactory advice on the next steps they need to take to improve their work. All pupils now have targets for improvement. Where teaching is good pupils understand these and can report what they are doing to achieve them. In other lessons pupils are aware that they have targets but they do not enable the pupils to make improvements in their work because they cannot remember them.

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

Since his appointment in October 2007, the headteacher has worked successfully through a period of school instability, due to staffing changes, to gain the trust of the community and to improve the learning environment. He has successfully encouraged pupils to take more responsibility for the running of the school. Pupils

report that the school is much better now. The headteacher has established a plan which is accurately focused on the necessary priorities for the school. This has led to an improvement in the overall quality of teaching and increased the rate of progress made by pupils. Consequently, the headteacher has made a satisfactory start which has led to satisfactory progress since the last monitoring inspection. School governance has strengthened considerably. Governors are now involved in regularly visits to the school to check the progress being made. This has enabled them to hold the school to account for its actions on a number of occasions since the last monitoring inspection.

Subject leaders have been well supported by the local authority and the headteacher. However, they do not have the capacity to lead school development with the urgency needed to provide lasting and sustained improvements. Ineffective subject leadership was an important contributory factor to the inadequate progress made by the school since the inspection in May 2007 and progress in this area continues to be too slow.

The monitoring and evaluation timetable established by the headteacher has been successful in ensuring that the work of the school is regularly checked. The impact of this timetable has been inconsistent because teachers have not been sufficiently challenged to improve their teaching. The school now has a good method for checking the progress pupils make. At the time of this inspection the school was not aware of the impact of this information on the quality of teaching and learning.

A satisfactory procedure for performance management is now in place to enable all teachers to make improvements in their work. This is appropriately linked to the progress being made by pupils and priorities for school improvement.

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 – satisfactory
- meet statutory requirements in providing teachers with targets and guidance on how they can improve – satisfactory.

#### External support

The school recognises the value of the support from the local authority and diocese as well as the necessary challenge provided to drive school improvement.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Give greater challenge to the more able pupils by ensuring that teachers understand how to differentiate lessons appropriately.
- Ensure that teachers are using prior knowledge about pupils to inform their planning so that all groups are able to make more rapid progress in lessons.
- Increase leadership capacity so that there is a much greater challenge to teachers to make more rapid improvements in teaching and learning.
- Improve the provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language.