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Mrs Sharon Grange  
Headteacher  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School  
Plaistow Lane  
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Dear Mrs Grange

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 2 March 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the chair of governors, the school improvement partner and the pupils who gave up some of their lunch break to speak to me

Since the inspection there have been no significant changes to the school's context.

As a result of the inspection on 30 June 2009, the school was asked to:

- improve achievement between Years 3 and 6, especially in writing, mathematics and science
- ensure that more teaching is at least good in the school as a whole
- make sure that all teachers are equally skilled at assessing pupils' skills, level of work and their progress
- ensure that governors and leaders audit and evaluate the quality of their work on community cohesion, so that they can plan developments for the future.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising pupils' achievement.

The last inspection reported that 'The school is beginning to emerge well from a period when things were not as good as they should have been, but there is still more to do.' The school is continuing along that journey with improvements seen at that inspection being better embedded. Pupils are very positive about changes this year, reporting that 'it's easier to do well because you're really being supported'. The school's internal data show improvement in all areas, although the improvement is



slower in writing than in other parts of the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are now identified much earlier and as a result support is put in place.

The school's assessment of the quality of teaching shows an improving trend. Inspection evidence supports the school's view that all teaching is at least satisfactory and an increasing proportion of lessons are often good or better. However, some teachers are inconsistent in the quality of their planning and delivery of lessons. The need to raise standards further and more quickly, so that pupils leave school with results that reflect their ability, is understood by all staff. To improve this further, teachers need to ensure that the whole ability range is challenged consistently. Pupils have demonstrated that they are capable of more than had previously been expected of them. They thrive on learning. When given the opportunity to engage in activities, they do so enthusiastically.

Consultants have provided training on assessing pupils' skills in both English and mathematics. Within the constraints of one teacher per year group, better attempts have been made to moderate work in writing and mathematics. Teachers are using tracking data to monitor pupil progress. As a result, teachers are clearer about how well pupils are doing and possible underachievement.

Teachers are now working with local authority advisers to ensure that planning and accurate assessment builds upon and extends learning for all pupils. Pupil progress reviews have been introduced, enabling teachers, in collaboration with leaders, to analyse the progress of pupils in their classes and address underachievement. Year 6 pupils are extremely positive about the quality of the marking in their books and explain how it has helped them to improve the levels at which they are working. In a Year 5 lesson the use of mini whiteboards provided regular checks on pupils' understanding. While the usefulness of assessment is still variable, it is transformed from previous practice and progress in this area has been particularly strong.

Governors and leaders audit and evaluate the quality of their work on community cohesion, so that they can plan developments for the future. An external consultant led a training session on community cohesion for the governing body. A community cohesion plan is in place and is evaluated with governors each half term. A recent diocesan inspection of religious education found community cohesion to be good. The school has a lot of links with the local, national and international community and these are now recorded and evaluated in a systematic way.

In addition to the specific issues for improvement from the report, the school's leadership has been proactive in improving the environment for learning. The fabric of the building has been enhanced and classrooms are bright, vibrant learning areas. The strong impression of pupils is that the school cares about their learning and progress much more than in the past. The perception of leaders and pupils is that behaviour has improved and pupils were clear that, following assemblies on the issue, pupils would have no reason to call any anti-bullying helpline. There has been strong support for school improvement from the local authority. Its statement of



action was initially returned because it did not include enough information about whether or not the local authority intended to use its powers of intervention to appoint additional governors, suspend delegated powers or appoint an Interim Executive Board. A subsequent version has fulfilled this requirement. The local authority has provided consultancy and has brokered effective partnership with other schools both in and out of the borough to provide valuable support to staff.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons  
Her Majesty's Inspector