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Mr M Aldred
St Margaret Mary RC Junior and Infant School
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Dear Mr Aldred

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Wednesday 3 March 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, staff and representatives from the governing body for the time they gave to meet with me.

Since the school was last inspected in March 2008 a newly qualified teacher has been appointed to Year 4. The senior leadership team has been restructured and strengthened with the appointment of experienced staff. A new Chair of Governors has been elected and four new governors have joined the governing body.

As a result of the inspection on 6-7 March 2008, the school was asked to:

- Raise standards in Key Stage 1 by increasing the number of pupils who reach the higher levels, and raise standards in science throughout the school by improving the subject knowledge of staff, providing more opportunities for pupils to investigate for themselves and improving assessment, so the work set stretches pupils of all abilities
- Improve the pace of lessons and provide more creative and exciting activities for the pupils
- Involve leaders and managers more in monitoring, evaluating and improving the work of the school, and improve governance.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Since the last inspection the school has placed a greater emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning and a whole school approach has been introduced. The science curriculum has been redesigned and additional resources purchased so that sufficient weight is given to investigative work. Systems have been introduced



to check pupils' progress regularly and the school keeps a close eye on the progress made by different groups of pupils. These are all positive developments and are contributing to rising standards and increased rates of progress.

Children in the Reception Year make good progress in most areas of learning and enter Year 1 working at the expected level for their age group. The latest school data indicates that pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1. However, by the end of Key Stage 2 rates of progress have increased and pupils make significantly above average progress, particularly in English.

In 2009 Year 6 test results were the best achieved by the school in the last three years. A greater proportion of pupils achieved the expected levels and overall attainment is now significantly above national averages. There have been good gains in science and mathematics compared to 2008. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels has also improved in all three core subjects and results are now in line with national averages. Over the last two years teacher's subject knowledge, particularly in science, has improved and this is contributing positively to rising standards. In 2009 Year 2 teacher assessments indicate that attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly average. The school has had some success increasing the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels at Key Stage 1. For example, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 2A+ in reading has improved by 8% and in mathematics by 7%. The school recognises that there is still work to be done to bring these figures in line with national averages.

The quality of teaching, assessment and learning is improving throughout the school. Assessment for learning strategies have been developed and staff have received training from the local authority and School Improvement Partner. Consequently, teachers have a secure understanding of how well their pupils are progressing and the next steps required to secure further improvement. Pupils are knowledgeable about their individual targets and this is contributing positively to improvements in progress. The majority of lessons observed during the inspection were judged to be good overall. Pupils are given regular opportunities to learn through practical activities, particularly in science. The pace of learning in lessons has improved since the last inspection. Lessons are planned in detail and generally good use is made of time. Teachers' high expectations ensure that pupils work at a brisk pace. The quality of teaching is regularly monitored and helpful feedback given to teachers to improve their effectiveness.

The headteacher and leadership team have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in the school. They monitor the impact of their actions frequently and rigorously. The headteacher and all of the staff have pulled together and worked well as a team to overcome some significant challenges. Staff with responsibilities have acquired the skills and authority to carry out their roles effectively. Each subject has a clear curriculum plan but these are not currently linked to the main school priorities.



Training from the local authority has been organised for new governors to ensure they are effective in monitoring the work of the school and holding it to account. All the expected protocols for governing body meetings are followed and statutory requirements are met. The Vice Chair of Governors has been elected to the position of Chair and will take up his new role in the near future. Governors met during the inspection demonstrated their support for the school. They are beginning to develop their expertise to enable them to help shape the direction of the school more effectively. However, there is not yet sufficient evidence that the governing body is providing a good level of support and challenge. Therefore, progress made by the governing body is satisfactory.

The good progress made by the school in addressing the very large majority of the issues for improvement, coupled with sound systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve further. The local authority has provided helpful support as and when requested by the school. The work undertaken by the School Improvement Partner has been effective in promptly addressing areas of weakness and supporting secure school improvement. The impact of this support has been good. During the inspection safeguarding procedures were checked and found to meet the latest requirements.

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

Marian Harker
Her Majesty's Inspector



Once the school has had 24 hours to report any factual inaccuracies, the post-visit letter is copied as appropriate to the following:

- Appropriate authority - chair of governors/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – except for academies
- For the Secretary of State use the following email address:
CausingConcern.schools@dcf.gov.uk)
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools

A copy with editing marked up should be forwarded to the:

Lead inspector