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6 July 2012

Mrs Richardson
Headteacher
St Augustine's Catholic Primary School
Conwy Court
Castlefields
Runcorn
Cheshire
WA7 2JJ

Dear Mrs Richardson

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Augustine's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 4 and 5 July 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2012. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. 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. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Halton.

Yours sincerely

Jane Millward

Her Majesty's Inspector



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2012

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics to at least national average levels by:
 - improving rapidly the progress all pupils make in their learning
 - ensuring the assessments of what pupils can do are secure, particularly so in writing
 - improving the quality of teaching so it is consistently good across the school
 - ensuring suggestions made to pupils for improving their work, in marking for example, are followed through with rigour and consistency
 - revising the register of pupils with special educational needs so that pupils are placed at the most appropriate stage to best support their learning and development.
- Improve the quality of leadership, including governance, and strengthen the school's capacity so that both are at least good by:
 - ensuring all actions identified in improvement plans are followed through systematically and with rigour and that leaders report clearly the impact of these actions on pupils' learning
 - providing training for all subject leaders and the Early Years Foundation Stage leader so they are confident in reporting the quality of achievement and teaching in their areas and that their judgements are based on secure evidence
 - ensuring records of concern about individual pupils are refined so that they provide a systematic overview of any actions taken and the resultant impact.
- Ensure that all children in the Early Years Foundation Stage benefit from the recently developed learning environment, particularly the outdoor area, so that their overall development is enhanced.



Special measures: monitoring of St Augustine's Catholic Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 04 and 5 July 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last inspection one teacher has resigned, one teacher has been appointed and four new governors have joined the governing body. The headteacher was absent during the inspection.

Achievement of pupils at the school

While whole-school moderation of assessment information, verified by the local authority, is resulting in a more secure understanding of pupil achievement overall, the analysis of individual key stage, cohort and group performance remains limited. Furthermore, the school lacks a consistent format for recording the proportion of pupils, in each year group, who will achieve in line with what is expected nationally.

Too many pupils continue to make inadequate progress. Pupils' attainment is variable across the school and there are significant differences in the progress made by different groups of pupils. Key Stage 1 performance information for current Year 2 pupils shows a decline in attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. No pupils are currently working at the higher Level 3. The school's Key Stage 2 assessment records provide contradictory information making it difficult to track pupils' progress or predict Key Stage 2 outcomes.

Pupils show positive attitudes to learning. They are keen to succeed in lessons and work well together. For example, in the Early Years Foundation Stage children enjoyed investigating where their treasure chest had been hidden by following maps and solving clues.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics to at least national average levels – inadequate

The quality of teaching



Staffing instability is hindering the school's work to improve the quality of provision. The quality of teaching continues to be largely inadequate. There is some good teaching but not enough if standards are to rise. This is because teachers lack an understanding of pupils' learning needs and their expectations are often too low and lack challenge. There is a lack of independent learning because teachers overly direct lessons. Teacher's questioning skills do not extend pupils' thinking so they are often unclear about what they are expected to learn. These factors combine to slow pupils' progress. Information and communication technology is not being used effectively to support learning.

While a new marking policy has been implemented and agreed by staff and governors it is not being used consistently by teachers. There is evidence of some effective marking where successes are celebrated and next steps in learning are identified but this is rare.

In the better lessons observed, teachers use their knowledge of pupils to match activities according to their abilities and pupils are given opportunities to work independently. They are encouraged to learn collaboratively, sharing their ideas with a partner, and by assessing their own learning. Good use of well-considered resources supports learning well.

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage environment has been improved. It is now well organised so that children can readily access equipment to support their learning. Better use is made of the outdoors to support learning. During the inspection, children were keen to learn outdoors and used the environment well, for example using musical instruments to create a thunderstorm. Opportunities for children to make progress are created through a topic based approach and activities are developed using all six areas of learning.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching – inadequate
- Ensure that all children in the Early Years Foundation Stage benefit from the learning environment – satisfactory

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are polite and well mannered. Their behaviour in lessons and around school remains positive and is good when lessons successfully engage their interest. In some lessons where teachers are overly dominant, and pupils are given few opportunities to be actively involved, they become passive and disinterested. New procedures to record incidents of poor behaviour have been implemented. Teachers are expected to take more responsibility for monitoring and recording behaviour in their classrooms although this initiative is at an early stage. There remains however a lack of clarity about how this work will improve pupils' behaviour over time.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school



The school's development plan is suitably focused on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Specific actions have been prioritised and progress has been noted although outcomes have been limited so far. However, the monitoring of the actions is not rigorous enough to secure change, nor does it identify how evaluations have been made. Little annotation has been made to evaluate progress so far. The school is working closely with an experienced National Leader for Education and his input is beginning to support the school in moving forward. The deputy headteacher has a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has established plans to target those areas for which she holds responsibility. For example, she has implemented a new marking policy which has been approved by the governing body and agreed by staff.

Progress meetings take place on a termly basis to examine attainment and progress for every pupil. While these sessions are starting to provide staff with useful information about the achievements of individuals much further work is required to ensure that this information is used to inform teachers' lesson planning. Monitoring of teaching and learning has taken place but with insufficient rigour. Identified areas for improvement have not been tackled well enough.

There are insufficient lines of accountability. Governors do not receive regular or accurate accounts of pupils' progress and this restricts them from holding senior leaders and staff to account or being able to check progress against the action plan. Additional governors from the local authority and diocese have been appointed. These governors bring a wealth of pertinent expertise.

A revised curriculum is in its early stages of development. While teachers are aiming to provide activities that fully motivate pupils and engage them in learning, the curriculum lacks coherence. While plans are in place to develop a skills-based curriculum map little has so far been achieved.

More information is now shared with parents and carers. For example, parents and carers are informed about their children's current performance against National Curriculum levels and this is promoting a greater understanding of how well their children are progressing.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of leadership, including governance, and strengthen the school's capacity so that both are at least good – inadequate

External support

The local authority statement of action and action plan are fit for purpose and provide suitable support for school improvement. The local authority and diocese have brokered support, including the appointment of additional governors, leadership support, attendance at update meetings and an Early Years Foundation Stage audit. This is providing the school with satisfactory support overall although there is much still requiring improvement.



