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3 December 2012

Miss A McCluskey
Headteacher
St Peter's Catholic Primary School
Prospect Road
Marlow
Buckinghamshire
SL7 2PJ

Dear Miss McCluskey

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to St Peter's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on Monday 3 December 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the school council. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school development plan, minutes of governing body meetings and monitoring and performance management evidence.

Context

There have been no significant changes to the organisation, structure or staffing of the school since the recent inspection, which judged the school to require improvement.

Main findings

The headteacher and governors have accepted the judgements made at the inspection as fair and have demonstrated a determination to address the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report. Suitable plans have been drawn up to accelerate pupils' progress in writing and mathematics and to improve the quality of teaching. Although it is too soon to make secure judgements about the impact of these plans, early indications are encouraging. All teachers have individual targets which relate directly to raising their expectations of what pupils can do and accelerating their progress. Teachers are starting to make better use of assessment data to match work more closely to the needs of pupils, who say that the work set is now more challenging as a result. The planning of lessons is being tightened through the development of a common planning format and a whole staff agreement regarding the essential features of a good lesson. More opportunities are being provided for pupils to use their writing skills in other subjects, although the school recognises that more needs to be done to ensure that such writing is of greater length. Pupils are using problem solving skills more frequently in mathematics, but leaders recognise the need to re-visit the school's calculation policy to ensure that there is a common approach towards the progressive teaching numeracy skills.

Although the headteacher and senior leaders are monitoring the quality of teaching more robustly, feedback to teachers does not always summarise clearly enough the specific strengths and weaknesses of the teaching in observed lessons. Training is planned to address this.

A good start has been made to ensure that the outside area of the Early Years Foundation Stage becomes a natural extension to the classroom, and the way in which the children's views have been sought regarding this is a strength. However, action plans for this issue do not indicate clearly enough how the school intends to evaluate the impact of the outside space on improving children's learning.

Working closely with the headteacher and senior leaders to drive improvement, the governing body has made a good start in improving the way in which it evaluates the performance of the school and holds senior leaders to account. This is being driven by a post-Ofsted working party which closely monitors progress and reports on this to parents. The school's development plan has been suitably adjusted so as to address the issues identified in the inspection report, although it does not indicate precisely enough how the success of actions to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement will be measured.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- embed the actions already taken to improve the quality of teaching so that there is secure evidence that this is resulting in accelerated progress in pupils' writing and mathematics
- strengthen the school's development plans so that they include measurable criteria against which governors and senior leaders can judge whether pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching is improving at a swift enough rate.
- Continue to work with the local authority to ensure that jointly agreed plans for supporting improvements in leadership and teaching result in improved outcomes.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority has worked effectively with the headteacher and governors to develop a training and support plan which is well-tailored to meet the school's needs. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of the plan as much of the support has yet to be delivered.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Buckinghamshire and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Northampton.

Yours sincerely

Chris Nye
Her Majesty's Inspector