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14 December 2012

Mrs Patricia Yardley
Headteacher
St John's Catholic Primary School
Trevu Road
Camborne
TR14 7AE

Dear Mrs Yardley

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

Following my visit to your school on 14 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 October 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and a group of pupils. A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the local authority who attended the feedback to the school at the end of the day. The inspector visited all classrooms with the headteacher. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed, including the feedback to teachers following lesson observations.

Context

Since the recent inspection which judged the school to require improvement, the deputy headteacher and a class teacher have been on sickness absence.

Main findings

A suitable action plan has been produced by the school to address the two areas for improvement identified in the inspection, which are the quality of teaching and learning, and leadership at all levels. It is separate from the school improvement plan and the action plan being prepared by the Governing Body. The local authority has also produced a detailed action plan, which includes a recommendation to write a raising achievement plan. It is not clear how the five plans will be implemented, monitored and evaluated systematically. The school's action plan includes appropriate actions, timescales, success criteria, and monitoring arrangements. However, it does not always make clear how the governing body will check that the school's actions are making a difference to pupils' learning and the quality of teaching. For example, it does not mention the levels of progress and proportions of good and better teaching which are required each term. Such measurable 'milestones' would also help to provide greater focus for the governors' visit logs.

The capacity of the leadership team to carry out the required improvements is reduced significantly by the absence of the deputy head. The headteacher is receiving good quality guidance in addressing staffing issues from a local leader of education and the local authority, but currently she has no-one to lead on improvements in teaching and learning. The literacy and numeracy subject leaders are beginning to develop appropriate leadership skills and the local authority has suitable plans to support them in this.

Not all teachers have individual targets that directly relate to accelerating pupils' progress. The headteacher regularly checks the work of staff and provides them with helpful feedback that focuses on how well pupils are learning. Her monitoring and evaluation suitably covers lessons, pupils' progress data, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussion with pupils, but does not include teachers' planning and use of assessment to meet the needs of all pupils.

The Governing Body is appropriately holding the school to account for the progress pupils make, following its training from the National College of School Leadership and local authority.

The headteacher 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:

- combine the separate action plans into one school improvement plan, with references linking it to the local authority plan, and make sure that it clearly specifies how governors will evaluate the impact of the school's action
- work with the local authority to make sure that sufficient senior leadership capacity is in place as a matter of priority

- develop the lesson observation and coaching skills of the deputy, and literacy and numeracy subject leaders to help to address inconsistency in teaching and the use of assessment.

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

External support

The local authority adviser and the headteacher have worked in partnership to coordinate a range of useful support for staff, although this is too recent to demonstrate any impact. The local authority has linked the school with a local leader of education in order to help the school continue to improve. Partnerships with a number of local schools have been established to provide teachers with opportunities to observe good practice. An external consultant has been recently deployed to help subject leaders develop their coaching skills. The governing body has benefitted from training and is now clear about how it will hold the school to account for the standards it attains.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Cornwall and the Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Sue Frater

Her Majesty's Inspector