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18 December 2012

Mrs Carol Hind
Headteacher
St Patrick's Catholic Primary School
Littledale Avenue
Heysham
Morecambe
Lancashire
LA3 2ER

Dear Mrs Hind

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school 17 December, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in September 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and two representatives of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated. Monitoring records of activity completed by the school and the local authority were scrutinised and the minutes of meetings of the governing body were considered.

Context

Pupil numbers have remained stable since the section 5 inspection.

The Year 1 teacher has resigned and a new teacher will take up post in January 2013.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The headteacher is taking robust and concerted action to raise standards. The areas for improvement identified in the school's recent inspection are being tackled systematically and the school's checking of teaching and learning is rigorous.

The headteacher, together with her deputy and the school's leaders for literacy and mathematics, undertake regular lesson observations and provide teachers with detailed, developmental feedback. The quality of lesson planning and teachers' marking are regularly reviewed.

Frequent checks are made on pupils' learning and action is being taken to pinpoint the precise knowledge and skills that pupils may have missed, largely due to prolonged periods of absence for a significant number of pupils of Irish Traveller or Romany Gypsy heritage. The school's curriculum planning has been adjusted to ensure that gaps in these pupils' learning are plugged. Support for pupils to help them reintegrate into school following absence has been developed. The local authority has funded some additional teaching time for the Year 6 teacher in order that booster classes can be provided to older pupils. The school has invested in new online resources in order that pupils can continue to learn even when they are away from school.

The school continues to work with families to encourage pupils' regular attendance and thereby accelerate their progress. Data for the current term indicate that attendance has improved by three percentage points on that of the autumn term 2011. Pupils are motivated by the good attendance rewards scheme that the school offers.

The governing body's new committee structure ensures that the school's improvement priorities are effectively scrutinised. The governors' achievement, progress, standards and attendance committee checks the school's progress regularly. Governors are knowledgeable and have a very clear understanding of the school's priorities, for which they hold the school to account.

The local authority's statement of support is appropriately detailed, incorporating challenging but achievable success criteria and indicating that a substantial resource is being provided to improve the school, in terms of both personnel and additional funding. The local authority provides well-judged support through its school adviser, monitoring and intervention adviser, literacy, numeracy and attendance consultants. The support of a Local Leader in Education has been brokered. In addition, the school has been proactive in working with a Catholic cluster of primary schools that is coordinated by the Diocese and enables school leaders and subject leaders to share their practice. The school has also built positive working relationships with other local schools to explore systems for improvement.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire and the Director of Education for Lancaster Diocese. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Shirley Gornall
Her Majesty's Inspector