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21 January 2013

Mrs P Johnstone
Headteacher
St Wilfrid's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School
Claremont Terrace
Blyth
Northumberland
NE24 2LE

Dear Mrs Johnstone

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

Following my visit to your school on 21 January 2013, 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 November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and two senior leaders; with four members of the governing body steering committee and with a representative of the local authority. During the visit, the inspector evaluated the school's improvement plans and looked at their data on pupils' progress and monitoring data on teaching and learning.

Context

Since the inspection, two teachers are on extended sickness absence, two other classes are being taught by supply teachers due to maternity leave and there is a new Chair of the Governing Body.

Main findings

Senior leaders, including governors have acted swiftly to identify barriers to improvement. They have drawn up an action plan in conjunction with the local authority, which identifies actions for improvement in teaching and learning and in improving pupils' progress. The plan clearly identifies the need to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, closely linked to teachers' performance. However, the current plan is over complicated and does not have the necessary small-steps and milestones for improvement which will help senior leaders and the governing body monitor the school's progress. There is also a lack of emphasis on which actions are the most urgent and which will be more effective when the school has a full complement of staff.

The governing body has formed a steering committee to monitor the school and hold senior leaders to account for pupils' progress. The committee is working closely with the local authority to improve their skills in this area but they themselves accept that their knowledge of school data in relation to pupils' progress is limited.

Senior leaders' systems to track pupils' progress and that of different groups within the school need updating to enable them to keep the governing body fully informed of the school's progress. The headteacher regularly monitors teaching and learning but the current system needs a greater emphasis on how pupils learn in lessons so that teachers can be held to account when progress is less than expected.

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 she visits the school again and that further action is taken to:

- revise the school's action plan to include measurable milestones, so that governors and senior leaders are able to easily measure the success of actions each term
- seek training from the local authority for governors so that they can better understand pupil performance data and use it to hold senior leaders to account
- as a matter of urgency update the current systems used to track pupils' progress across the school.

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

External support

The local authority has put together a bespoke package of support for senior leaders and the governing body. This support includes partnering the school with a local outstanding school, whose speciality is the management of teaching and learning. The support planned so far has been effective.

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

Yours sincerely

Joy Frost
Her Majesty's Inspector