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5 February 2013

John Stanley
Headteacher
St John's Catholic Comprehensive
Rochester Road
Gravesend
DA12 2JW

Dear Mr Stanley

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

Following my visit to your school on 5 February 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 December 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders and three governors including the Chair of the Governing Body. A telephone interview was carried out with a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan and other documentation relating to the plan were evaluated. Governors' minutes and local authority notes of visit were also evaluated. The HMI carried out a tour of the school with the headteacher.

Context

Three new governors have been elected to the governing body.

Main findings

Senior leaders, governors and staff are responding constructively to the recent section 5 inspection judgements. Senior leaders, supported by the governing body,

have used the recommendations from the inspection to develop short term action plans to tackle the areas of the school's work requiring improvement. Action plans have some measurable success criteria and two week timescales. The plans focus on improving teaching and, particularly in the first four weeks, marking. Leaders and governors are aware that these plans aim to tackle a large number of areas at once and governors are concerned whether the level of activity can be sustained. Owing to their short timescales impact measures have been difficult to quantify. However, while the first two weeks were not as successful as the school would have liked the second two weeks have brought about improvements to quality and consistency of marking in the school. The current school improvement plan is very detailed and not closely linked to the new action plans.

The governing body works closely with the senior leaders carrying out regular visits to the school to monitor its work. The senior team have yet to chart, in planning, the school's journey to being good or produce milestones over time to measure progress on that journey. As a result governors' sometimes find it difficult to understand the key areas of the school's work that need most improvement. For example, teaching and progress in Key Stage 3 are weaker than in the rest of the school and need more improvement than other key stages. Governors are not currently playing an active role in monitoring action or improvement plans. However, the Chair of the Governing body is kept updated on the school's progress by senior leaders. A targeted training and development programme is in place to improve teaching and careful monitoring by the school shows improvement since the inspection.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

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

Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- develop a concise new school improvement plan that clearly targets when and how the school will become good and ensure that strategic monitoring of the school's progress closely involves governors
- ensure that the school's action plans are streamlined and feed seamlessly into the new improvement plan
- make the monitoring of the school's journey to good more incisive by developing clear measurable milestones set at regular intervals to measure the school's progress.

External support

The school has been supported by the local authority improvement partner. A local authority consultant is working with the school leadership to improve teaching and learning. For example, he recently carried out joint observations with the leadership

team in Key Stage 3 and met directors of learning. The school is also looking to external support through several links with schools in Kent and beyond.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Archdiocese of Southwark, the Education Funding Agency and the Director of Children's Services for Kent.

Yours sincerely

Peter Gale

Her Majesty's Inspector