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15 February 2013

Mrs Emlin Bunn  
Headteacher  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School  
The Broadway  
Barking  
London  
IG11 7AR

Dear Mrs Bunn

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

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

#### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and interim deputy headteacher, other teachers including some with leadership responsibilities, representatives from the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. The headteacher and Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) walked around the school to look at the environment for learning and discussed the latest evidence from senior leaders' observations of teaching quality.

#### **Context**

Two teachers left at the end of the autumn term and have been replaced by two teachers on temporary contracts. The interim deputy headteacher joined the school in January 2013 on a one-year contract to strengthen leadership during the long-term absence of the substantive deputy headteacher. One teacher will leave shortly

to begin maternity leave and another teacher is leaving at Easter. Another teacher is currently absent on special leave. In total, four staff are on temporary contracts. The local authority has designated the school as one causing concern and so has set up a monitoring board comprising a local authority representative, several governors and the headteachers of the nearby primary and secondary Catholic schools.

## **Main findings**

The school's action plan has appropriate actions to tackle the weaknesses identified by the previous inspection. Targets in the plan are based on analysis of the pupils' current levels of attainment and show that some pupils have to make up a lot of ground. Much of the action is taking place now so the plan will need to be refreshed once leaders have judged the impact of the current actions. The methods for checking whether actions are effective are not clear. A timetable showing when and how actions will be checked would be helpful, especially for governors. Their role in checking that actions are effective is not specified although, in practice, governors do check the impact of the school's actions through the monitoring board.

The interim deputy headteacher has had a key role in supporting the headteacher to set clear expectations of teachers to improve the quality of teaching. She has set about the task of supporting them with drive and energy. The format for lesson planning has changed and staff look carefully at information about pupils' levels to spot those who need to make more progress. Judgements made on the quality of teaching are too reliant on classroom observations without taking account of a range of evidence, such as the quality of work in pupils' books and the assessments of their levels. Training for other leaders needs to be stepped up so that they can demonstrate the impact of their work to support the school's journey to good.

Governors have received training from the local authority and their participation in the monitoring board gives them a clear role as a critical friend to the school's leaders. They no longer simply accept information from the headteacher without questioning it. Through the newly formed standards committee governors are demanding more and better-quality information. They are patently aware of issues around the quality of teaching and the need for some rapid improvements among some staff. They also acknowledge concerns about discontinuity in pupils' learning given staff turnover and the temporary nature of many staff.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspections. The recruitment of permanent staff will be key to how quickly the school can improve the quality of teaching. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- improve the action plan so that it provides a clear framework for checking that actions are having the desired impact and involving governors in the process

- develop the roles of other staff with leadership responsibilities so that they can demonstrate the impact of their actions on the quality of teaching and on pupils' progress.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection. At the next inspection visit in the summer term, HMI will evaluate the impact that leaders are having on improving the quality of teaching. The school will need to show that pupils' progress is improving as a result of better teaching and that programmes of support for pupils with special educational needs are having a positive impact on their progress.

### **External support**

The school uses the support of the local authority well. The local authority provides challenge to the school's leaders and, through the monitoring board, provides training for governors in how to ask searching questions of the school's leaders. Consultants have helped the school's leaders to check the quality of teaching, supported the coordinator for special educational needs and provided training for staff in how to support pupils who speak English as an additional language. Additional support arranged through the informal partnership with a local school has now come to an end.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Wotherspoon  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**