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25 February 2013

Mrs M Lewicki
Headteacher
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Banbury
Fiennes Road
Banbury
OX16 0ET

Dear Mrs Lewicki

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

Following my visit to your school on 25 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 two acting interim headteachers, other senior leaders, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the interim executive board and a representative of the local authority. The school action plan was evaluated.

Context

Since the recent inspection, two acting interim headteachers have been appointed on a temporary basis to give support and guidance to the school's two acting deputy headteachers and interim executive board.

Main findings

The school has responded positively to addressing the weaknesses identified by the inspection. Effective steps have been taken to clarify and strengthen the role of senior leaders during the long-term absence of the headteacher. The interim executive board continues to hold the school to account well and is ensuring that

measures to boost the leadership capacity of the school are beginning to lead to improvements in pupils' achievement. Senior leaders are becoming more effective in monitoring the development of teachers' skills. Pupils' progress is also being better tracked and monitored by teachers, although it is too early to evaluate how consistently well all teachers understand and interpret the new data. The quality of lesson planning is improving and teaching assistants are being involved effectively in this process so that they can be used more productively to support individuals and small groups of pupils. It is too early to see the widespread impact of improved planning on pupils' learning and progress. Staff require further guidance to understand fully how best to challenge the more able pupils.

The school's self-evaluation process is sharper and school planning clearly indicates important steps that need to be taken to help the school become good. Ways of measuring interim progress towards achieving overall targets and objectives are clear.

The staff have a positive attitude to these changes and are very determined to work together to ensure the school is judged good at the next inspection.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified in the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommended that further action is taken to:

- ensure that all teachers fully understand how to interpret the new assessment information so that planned lesson tasks better meet the learning needs of all pupils
- ensure that teachers explore further what able pupils are capable of in different subject areas, so that appropriately challenging work is provided for them.

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

External support

The local authority is supporting the school well by arranging to strengthen the capacity of the senior leadership of the school during the headteacher's absence. This extra support has helped to sharpen strategic planning and to enable new procedures to be introduced to raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the interim executive board, the Director of Children's Services for Oxfordshire and the Director for Religious Education at the Arch Diocese of Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm
Her Majesty's Inspector