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15 March 2013

Mrs Pat Henson  
Headteacher  
St Patrick's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Consett  
Stanley Street  
Consett  
County Durham  
DH8 6LN

Dear Mrs Henson

**Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to St Patrick's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Consett, County Durham DH8 6LN**

Following my visit to your school on 14 March 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 January 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

**Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, a group of pupils, the literacy and numeracy coordinators, the Chair and other members of the governing body and two representatives of the local authority. The school improvement plan and a range of other documents were reviewed.

**Context**

There are no significant contextual matters.

## **Main findings**

Governors and senior leaders recognise that teaching, leadership and pupils' achievement need to improve and have set about making this happen.

The re-structuring of pupil review meetings bring a sharper focus on checking pupils' progress and represent a positive step forward. Not enough is yet being done in these meetings however to hold teachers to account for the progress being made although the introduction of a new assessment regime is providing the means by which senior leaders and governors can exert greater scrutiny of teachers' work. The school's revised calculation policy is clarifying what will be taught and is demonstrating higher expectations of pupils' capabilities.

The action plan covers all areas of improvement from the inspection report. While it provides specific details about what will be done, it lacks a clear line-of-sight between stated actions and their intended impact on improving leadership, teaching and pupils' achievement. The plan does not stipulate clearly enough how progress will be evaluated or who will be held responsible for carrying out specific actions. Senior leaders need to be clearer about how they will undertake their strategic role in evaluating the impact of the action plan on all the areas for improvement from the inspection report.

Under the new Chair of Governors, members of the governing body have started to demonstrate more assertiveness in challenging senior leaders about the school's performance and are more expectant about pupil outcomes. In addition, special interest governor visits have begun with each governor providing a written report for all governing body members. However, there is no overall coordination in how these visits will be sequenced or any follow through actions which may be needed.

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 further action is taken to:

- ensure that the school action plan is reviewed so that:
  - there is a clear line-of-sight between key priorities and expected outcomes
  - there are clear lines of responsibility so that named staff can be held accountable for their work in leading on specific activities
  - senior leaders play a key strategic role in checking the impact of actions on the quality of leadership, teaching and pupil outcomes.

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

## **External support**

The local authority has arranged for school-to-school support, particularly to help with improvements in assessment practice and to develop the role of middle leaders. Another school is providing staff in Key Stage 1 with the help they need to revise the content and structure of the curriculum. Local authority staff are working directly to support the numeracy coordinator and have provided support to the senior leadership team and governors in the production of the action plan.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Durham and the Director of Education for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.

Yours sincerely

Tom Grieveson

**Her Majesty's Inspector**