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Mrs Andrea Towey
Headteacher
St Augustine's Catholic Primary School
Henshall Avenue
Latchford
Warrington
Cheshire
WA4 1PY

Dear Mrs Towey

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

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. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the Chair and one other member of the Governing Body and a group of pupils. A meeting was also held with a representative from the local authority. The school's development plan and monitoring file was also evaluated.

Context

There are no significant changes since the most recent inspection.

Main findings

A clear and effective development plan has been put in place. This is firmly focussed on raising attainment, especially of reading and writing and improving provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Actions are clearly linked to precise outcomes and to a comprehensive programme of on-going professional development brokered by the local authority through outside agencies. Developing the role of governors to challenge and support the school is also included. The inspection has provided a strong impetus for change and there is a clearer collective vision of how this can be achieved.

Inconsistencies in teaching and weaknesses in management are beginning to be addressed. There is more noticeable rigour and frequency in the monitoring of lessons. Scrutiny and self-evaluation has increased since the new headteacher took up her post in September. Formal observations, drop-in sessions as well as scrutiny of planning and pupils' work are more frequent and now involve middle managers. This is also being linked much more effectively to the monitoring and assessment of pupils' progress. Regular termly meetings ensure much earlier identification of underachievement and enable intervention strategies to be implemented. There is an extensive programme of staff development which is intended to improve staff expertise. This is closely linked to performance management and school priorities. Current improvements are focussed on literacy and numeracy and, as yet, there is less evidence of impact across the curriculum. Pupils have also recognised the changes that are taking place. They commented positively on the fact that behaviour has improved and there is less disruption in lessons. They have noticed that they are more frequent out of classroom experiences and that 'their school is now a better and safer place'. They approve the ending of 'Golden Time', saying it had little impact on their learning. Marking of work by their teachers has also improved and they are now more aware of what they need to do to get better. A firmer commitment to improve provision is evident across the school which is now in a better position to make more rapid progress than previously.

The governing body is more pro-active and involved in monitoring improvements. There has been some re-structuring of responsibilities and a Standards committee has been established which meets on a regular basis to enable governors to keep abreast of developments. There are plans for link governors to meet with teachers to be updated on progress in specific curriculum areas, especially literacy, mathematics, religious education and the Early Years foundation stage. Training is being provided through the local authority to develop the skills necessary to ask appropriate questions and challenge teachers and school leaders.

Senior leaders and governors are taking 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:

- continue to develop effective practice in literacy and numeracy in order to raise standards improve progress and ensure pupils develop and apply these skills across the curriculum
- ensure that points for improvement to teaching, which have been identified through more rigorous observations, are followed up to show impact on pupils' learning
- ensure that responsibility for improving practice is shared across the school and involves middle leaders more fully and on a regular basis
- continue to implement the extensive and coherent approach to staff training and development
- continue to work with governors to ensure they receive appropriate training to enable them to fulfil their roles as a critical friend confidently and effectively.

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

External support

The local authority has maintained a good level of support. It recognised that the school was in a vulnerable position during a period of significant management change prior to the inspection. There is a commitment to supporting improvements in teaching and learning especially in English. Mathematics and the Early Years. Much of this support is through outside consultants brokered through the authority. Training is also being provided for governors. Specific training is planned in the near future to skill them in their role as a 'critical friend' and enable them to question teachers and senior leaders about the improvements being made. This is at an early stage of development.

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

Yours sincerely

Leszek Iwaskow
Her Majesty's Inspector