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Mr Jon Murray
Headteacher
St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Cheetham Hill Road
Dukinfield
Cheshire
SK16 5LB

Dear Mr Murray

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

Following my visit to your school on 25 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 December 2012 . 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, three members 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 were also evaluated.

Context

There are no significant changes since the most recent inspection.

Main findings

The development plan provides clear direction and a vision for how the school is to improve in order to become a good school. Actions are clearly focussed on the key issues identified in the recent Ofsted report and reflect distributed leadership and responsibility. It is comprehensive and provides clear time frames linked to appropriate success criteria. Lines of accountability are clear. There is also shared responsibility with improvements identified on a master copy on display in the staff room. This is annotated and amended in the light of review of progress. Developments are supported well by a comprehensive programme of on-going professional training which includes visits to different schools to observe outstanding practice.

Inconsistencies in teaching are being addressed with specific support being provided as appropriate. There is clear rigour in the monitoring of lessons. New lesson observation forms are being used which focus clearly on pupil outcomes and provide a clear steer on improvements in teaching. Scrutiny of work is more rigorous and responsibility for this is shared across the distributed leadership. Effective monitoring and assessment of pupils' work provides a clear picture of which pupils are underachieving and allows for appropriate support to be provided. Predictive data suggests that standards will rise in the forthcoming national tests. Pupils have also noticed the improvements which are taking place. They noted that 'teachers talk less' and that they have 'have greater responsibility for their own learning'. Pupils enjoy working collaboratively and the more able are encouraged to guide those who might be having difficulties. Supporting others reinforces their own learning. Pupils have also noted that different tasks are now being given to different groups in the class. They have greater ownership of what is happening in class as their views of lessons are gathered through the pupil leadership team and advise further improvements. Marking is more informative and is being followed up. There is real energy evident across the school to ensure more rapid progress is achieved. There is good capacity for improvement.

The governing body is fully involved in monitoring improvements. The messages in the Ofsted report have been dissected, discussed and accepted. Criticism has stimulated debate and questioned the previous pace of improvement. A post-Ofsted committee is active in monitoring progress and is well informed of developments. Further training is being provided by the local authority to develop the skills necessary to challenge teachers and school leaders more effectively. This includes a better understanding of school data.

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 improve and develop the quality of teaching by focussing on providing challenging and engaging activities which allow pupils to develop and apply their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum
- widen the variety and range of resources and teaching ideas to better support learning in the classroom
- continue observations of outstanding practice in other schools as part of a coherent approach to staff training
- continue to monitor teaching and pupils' progress with rigour in order to raise attainment, especially in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

External support

The local authority provides a high level of advice and support and an effective partnership has become established. Support is brokered as required, both to share good practice but also to support weaker teaching. The local authority consultant has worked alongside school leaders to improve monitoring and classroom observation. Plans are in place to further develop the role of teaching assistants and raise awareness of how parents can become more aware and involved in their children's learning and progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Leszek Iwaskow

Her Majesty's Inspector