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22 March 2013

Mrs Patricia Yardley
Headteacher
St John's Catholic Primary School
Trevu Road
Camborne
TR14 7AE

Dear Mrs Yardley

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

Following my visit to your school on 21 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, the seconded assistant headteacher, subject leaders for literacy and mathematics, pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a senior manager from the local authority. I carried out joint lesson observations with you and the assistant headteacher in turn, visiting all classrooms, and gave feedback to each teacher. The observations focused on writing, which the school has identified as an area for improvement. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the school improvement plan.

Context

Since the first monitoring visit in December 2012, the substantive deputy headteacher has returned from sickness absence, but has not yet resumed her

leadership responsibilities. The local authority has seconded an assistant headteacher to the school until the end of the summer term. The assistant headteacher is also covering the Year 4 class, where the class teacher has been on long-term sickness since September 2012.

Main findings

The school has produced a single school improvement plan to replace the numerous action plans in place at the time of the first monitoring visit. This is helping to provide clear direction for the staff. The plan is focused on the key priorities and outlines in detail suitable actions to be taken. It is reviewed regularly to ensure progress is being made on each of the identified actions.

The capacity of the leadership team to carry out the required improvements has been strengthened by the secondment of an experienced assistant headteacher to the school. In addition, the monitoring, evaluation and coaching skills of the literacy and mathematics subject leaders, and of the special educational needs coordinator, are being developed effectively.

All teachers now have suitable individual targets that relate directly to accelerating pupils' progress and school leaders are tackling weaker teaching. The school has commissioned an analysis of the levels of progress pupils make each term and has appropriate plans to use this to hold teachers to account for the progress their pupils make. The governing body is now better informed about the quality of teaching, and of the progress of each year group and of all groups of pupils. It is beginning to use this information well to hold the school to account for its standards of attainment. The Chair of Governors has identified the need to review roles within the governing body to delegate more responsibility. This will enable him to focus his support for the headteacher on managing staff absence and underperformance in teaching.

Pupils' progress remains inconsistent across year groups due to teachers' variable use of assessment. Progress in writing is weaker than in reading and mathematics. Not all teachers are skilled in constantly checking pupils' understanding during the lesson and adapting activities and questions to promote consistently good progress for all pupils. The learning objectives for lessons, and particularly writing lessons, are not always specific or tailored to pupils' different stages of learning. Most pupils know the level of work they are aiming for in reading, writing and mathematics. They are given written guidance, known as curricular targets, to help them to reach their levels. Not enough use is made of the targets in lessons. Targets for writing are not focused sufficiently on developing pupils' use of language. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and write encouraging comments. They do not systematically write the next step to be achieved and check that pupils have responded to this.

There are consistent strengths in the quality of teaching. Good relationships between teachers and pupils promote pupils' positive attitudes to learning, their confidence to contribute to lessons and their good behaviour. Pupils say they feel safe in school

and they enjoy the range of engaging activities provided, especially working together, storytelling, role play and using computers. Teachers make effective use of a range of resources including teaching assistants, interactive whiteboards, computers and media such as film clips. They expect pupils to apply new skills independently so that they learn through, for example, problem solving, discussion and researching information. Pupils assess each other's work, but teachers do not always give the pupils clear guidance on how to assess accurately.

The headteacher and governors are taking reasonable 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 promote consistently good progress for all pupils by:

- developing teachers' skills in constantly checking the understanding of pupils during the lesson and adapting activities and questions to promote consistently good progress for all pupils
- making sure that learning objectives for lessons, and particularly writing lessons, are specific
- tailoring lessons to pupils' different stages of learning, for example by making better use of individual curricular targets and checking that targets for writing focus on developing pupils' use of language
- identifying the next steps to be achieved when marking pupils' work and checking that pupils have responded to them.

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

External support

The local authority is providing a wide range of effective support for the school. It includes training for the governing body, and support for the headteacher and leadership team from a local leader of education and local authority staff. It also includes support for teachers from local outstanding teachers. In addition, an experienced assistant headteacher has been seconded to the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Frater

Her Majesty's Inspector