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19 March 2013

Mrs Janette Gibson
Headteacher
St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School
Huttock End Lane
Stacksteads
Bacup
Lancashire
OL13 8LD

Dear Mrs Gibson

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

Following my visit to your school on 18 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, I met with you, four teachers, three members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school action plan was evaluated and discussed in detail.

Context

There have been no staffing changes since the last inspection.

Main findings

Leaders, managers, governors and the local authority are working in close collaboration to raise standards. The entire team of five teachers has readily embraced the areas for improvement from the last inspection. They are working collaboratively and with urgency to share good practice and ideas.

Teachers' plans for their pupils' learning are regularly and systematically monitored. The plans provide a clear focus on specific issues such as the level of challenge for the most able pupils, writing, and problem-solving in mathematics. Governors are an effective driving force for change and offer robust support and challenge to leaders and managers. They have reviewed the use of the government funding received by the school to ensure pupils in receipt of free school meals make better progress. Governors have a good understanding of the challenges facing leaders and managers in their bid to further raise standards.

All teachers including yourself are responsible for the leadership of at least one subject. Teachers are pro-active in addressing their training needs. They are rightly focussing upon improving pupils' writing across a range of subjects. Teachers are also drawing on a wider range of teaching methods in mathematics to ensure that the subject is taught consistently well. Teachers have improved their understanding of how to use information about pupil's abilities to challenge the most able.

Senior leaders, governors and the local authority are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, I recommend that further action is taken to:

- formalise agreed expectations for lesson planning, target-setting and the monitoring of progress
- work more closely with the local authority to strengthen induction procedures
- continue to develop the role of governors in challenging leaders more rigorously about the achievement of all pupils
- further refine the school improvement plan so all staff understand the key priorities for next term.

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

External support

The local authority has worked with senior leaders to develop a more focussed action plan. Training about helping the most able pupils make better progress has been attended by all teachers. The local authority has reviewed the way leaders and managers evaluate and monitor standards. Links are established with other primary schools to share good practice. A mathematics consultant will be coming to work with the school to ensure that all teachers are confident to deliver mathematics in an interesting and engaging way.

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

Yours sincerely

Sally Kenyon

Her Majesty's Inspector