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1 May 2013

Miss A McCluskey
Headteacher
St Peter's Catholic Primary School
Prospect Road
Marlow
Buckinghamshire
SL7 2PJ

Dear Miss McCluskey

Monitoring inspection of St Peter's Catholic Primary School for schools judged as requiring improvement under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Following my visit to your school on 1 May 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.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 2012.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and members of the governing body. I had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including samples of pupils' work, the school development plan, minutes of governing body meetings and monitoring and planning files. We also undertook a learning walk around the school.

Context

Since the last visit one governor has resigned and you are in the process of appointing a replacement. You have appointed a new deputy headteacher, who will take up her post in September, and you are in the process of appointing replacements for the part-time teachers who will be leaving at the end of the

summer term. One new teacher has been appointed to teach in Year 4 and another as a job share in Year 6.

Main findings

There is clear evidence that, since the recent section 5 inspection and my subsequent first monitoring inspection, you have taken effective action to address the points for improvement identified in the section 5 inspection report. Although progress has been swifter in some areas than in others, the school is on the right track and there is increasingly secure evidence that planned actions are having a positive impact on pupils' progress, the quality of teaching and the leadership of the school.

Pupils' progress across the school in writing is rapidly improving. Pupils in Year 2 and 6 are on track to attain well above the national averages and the proportion expected to attain the higher levels is much higher than in recent years. This is because there has been a concerted focus on providing pupils with regular opportunities for purposeful, extended writing in a wide range of subjects. For example, on our learning walk we observed pupils in Year 5 enthusiastically writing imaginary diaries in which they were exploring what it would be like to be an immigrant in Great Britain in the 1950s. Although pupils' writing is not always well-presented, the quality and quantity of their written work has improved considerably this year. In mathematics, the recent development of a calculation policy has had a positive impact on ensuring that numeracy skills are developed progressively and systematically across the school. However, you recognise that more needs to be done to develop teachers' confidence in ensuring that pupils' use and apply these skills to solve a range of problems.

The monitoring of teaching is much more rigorous and the feedback provided to teachers is now clearly identifying strengths and areas to improve. The resulting targets are more closely aligned to training and follow-up observations are starting to check the impact of such training on the quality of teaching. As a result the profile of teaching is improving and the school's detailed lesson observations provide convincing evidence to indicate that the majority of lessons are good. Teachers' planning is better matched to the needs of different groups and demonstrates greater flexibility in responding to the emerging needs of the class. However, a remaining weakness in teaching is the inconsistency in the marking of pupils' work. Although marking is usually accurate and provides clear guidance about how to improve, sometimes teachers written feedback does not provide a good model of neat, legible writing and pupils' mistakes are not always followed up in subsequent marking.

The outside area of the Early Years Foundation Stage has been developed as an attractive, well-designed and exciting natural extension to the classroom. On our

learning walk we saw clear evidence that it is having a very positive impact on the development of children's social, communication and language skills.

There have been a number of significant improvements to the leadership of the school. The modified school improvement plan now includes much clearer criteria against which success can be measured and this is very helpful to governors in holding the school to account. You recognise the need to review the leadership structure and clarify senior and middle leadership roles when new staff take up their posts in September. The governors themselves demonstrate an impressive awareness of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, based on a detailed understanding of the data and excellent knowledge of the school. There is a strong sense of collegiality with staff and governors working together in a determined effort to raise standards. Classrooms present as bright attractive learning environments, but you recognise the need to further develop the library and de-clutter common areas of the school.

Following my visit, I recommend that you take further action to:

- Build upon recent improvements in teaching by:
 - ensuring greater consistency in the quality of marking
 - developing teachers' confidence in developing pupils' skills in problem solving
- Improve the quality of pupils' presentation of their written work
- Continue to improve the school's environment so that common areas are clear of clutter and are bright and attractive areas for learning.

External support

The local authority has continued to work effectively with you and the governors to develop training and support which is well-matched to meet the school's needs. The impact of their support has been evident, particularly with regard to how effectively the governors have developed their roles.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Nye
Her Majesty's Inspector