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Miss Sarah Eady
Headteacher
St Ann's Catholic Primary School
McIntyre Road
Stocksbridge
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S36 1DG

Dear Miss Eady

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

Following my visit to your school on 7 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 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. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During my visit, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher, a representative of the Catholic Diocese of Hallam, a representative of the local authority and two members of the governing body. The school improvement and action plans were evaluated. You and the deputy headteacher accompanied me on a tour of the school. I also looked at the written feedback to teachers following lesson observations, minutes of governing body minutes and behaviour logs.

Context

One teacher is leaving the school at the end of the summer term. The school has appointed an experienced teacher who will also be the mathematics leader. She will take up her post in September. The school is planning to convert to an academy by the end of this year.

Main findings

You have lost no time in tackling inadequate teaching and getting to grips with finding solutions to difficult staffing problems. Currently this involves making changes to how teaching assistants work and some planned redundancies. Responsibilities for different aspects of the school's work are shared among permanent teachers. However, because of the staffing problems, the lion's share of these responsibilities has fallen to you and the deputy headteacher. This is something you plan to review when the new mathematics leader joins the school in September.

Leaders take firm action when teaching is less than good. They give teachers useful tips on how to improve their work. Sometimes leaders' comments make crisp links between the quality of teaching and pupil's learning. However, there are examples when this is not as clear. Swift action has been taken to improve teachers' marking and your recent review demonstrates a noticeable improvement. Pupils' behaviour is also showing signs of improvement and there has been a reduction in the number of times pupils are taken out of class.

Leaders have visited partner schools to see effective ways of teaching mathematics. This has given them some helpful ideas about how to improve pupils' interest and progress. Teachers are making regular checks on learners' grasp of different types of mathematics. This information has highlighted where there are gaps in their knowledge and where they have misunderstandings. This has helped teachers improve their lesson planning to support more pupils in learning exactly the right things at the right level.

The school's action plans are focused on the right things. The plans include helpful descriptions of what success will eventually look like, who will check it and when. However, it isn't always crystal clear how leaders and governors will know if the plans are working in the short term. This makes it difficult for them to be sure they are on the right lines. Members of the governing body are reflective and have reviewed the quality of their own work with the help of external partners. They recognise they need to improve the quality of their visits to the school to see how well things are going for themselves.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take 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:

- sharpen improvement planning so that it is easy for teachers, leaders and governors to check the progress the school is making towards improvements
- accelerating the rate of improvement in the quality of teaching by reviewing leadership responsibilities
- establishing strong systems for governors to collect first-hand information about the quality of the school' work.

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

External support

The school has made effective use of the support of the local authority and especially that offered by the diocese. For example, the diocese put the school in touch with an external adviser who worked with you checking how well pupils were being taught mathematics. As a result leaders are putting in place a common approach to teaching calculations.

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

Yours sincerely

Joan Hewitt

Her Majesty's Inspector