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18 June 2013

Ms Rowena Herbert
St Joseph's Catholic and CofE (VA) Primary School
Calver Crescent
Staveley
Chesterfield
S43 3LY

Dear Ms Herbert

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Joseph's Catholic and CofE (VA) Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plans were evaluated. I held discussions also with pupils during a brief tour of the school.

Context

The arrangements for your secondment to the school as headteacher have been extended to cover the whole of the next academic year. You are in the process of restructuring the staffing at the school. There will be fewer teaching staff at the school next year.

Main findings

You have taken action rapidly to ensure that essential resources and systems are in place to enable the school to make progress. Your action plans are focussed clearly on the areas for improvement from the inspection and they emphasise improving pupils' progress and attainment. You have put in place a programme of staff development that is resulting in improved teaching and helping leaders and managers at the school to carry out the roles they have been given better. You have done much also to bring parents and carers into the school.

The pupils with whom I met spoke excitedly about the improvements taking place at the school. They described how lessons were more stimulating and changes in the way the teachers are marking the pupils' work are improving the pupils' motivation. They were impressed particularly by the many high-quality displays of their work that are now to be seen all around the school. Along with important innovations such as the pupil parliament, the changes are evidently increasing the pupils' enjoyment of learning.

An external review of the governing body is now under way. Governors express confidence in the review and say it has already led to improvements in governance.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- set out plans for securing the leadership of the school beyond the time of your current secondment to it. In particular, the plans should include identifying options in the event that the school is unsuccessful again in recruiting a substantive headteacher.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The link between St Joseph's and your own school, arranged by the dioceses and the local authority, has been essential in bringing about significant and rapid improvements at St Joseph's. It is a strong link and is proving very effective as a focus for the professional development of the staff at St Joseph's. The local authority arranged for the review of the governing body to be carried out by a National Leader of Governance and is fully involved in the training programme for governors.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Moss

Her Majesty's Inspector