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1 July 2013

Mr Steve McCarthy
Acting Headteacher
St Marie's Catholic Primary School and Nursery
Merttens Drive
Rugby
CV22 7AU

Dear Mr McCarthy

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Marie's Catholic Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to your school on 28 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. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and the assistant headteacher, six representatives from the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated along with a range of other documents. We visited six classrooms to talk to pupils and to look at work in their books.

Context

Since the last inspection the headteacher has resigned. The deputy headteacher has been the acting head since April 2013. A new assistant headteacher has been in post since Easter. A teacher has been employed to work with the more able pupils in mathematics and writing. A teaching assistant has been employed to work in Year 3.

Main findings

There is clear determination from you, other senior leaders and governors to make sure the school improves rapidly and consistently. You have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The action plan focusses sharply on the areas for improvement. It states who is responsible for each action and exactly how its impact will be monitored.

Senior and middle leaders are making more regular and focussed checks on pupils' progress and the school's data identifies that pupils are making better progress than at the time of the last inspection. As a result of a range of support, the English and mathematics leaders are now taking a more proactive role in the leadership and monitoring of the teaching and pupil outcomes in their subject.

Teachers have been provided with a range of support to improve their teaching. The school's monitoring shows that this has been effective in increasing the proportion of teaching that is good or better, particularly in Key Stage 2. A very small proportion of inadequate teaching remains. Appropriate support is in place to address this.

During my visits to classrooms, pupils could identify the level at which they are working in writing and mathematics. Target bookmarks help them to understand what they need to do to move to the next level. Teachers referred to these targets in their teaching and pupils say this is helpful. Evidence from books I looked at shows that pupils are more regularly responding to the comments from the teacher. This was most evident in mathematics. In writing pupils are not consistently using the comments to go back and improve their writing. Some pupils in Key Stage 1 were unable to read the feedback that teachers had given and therefore were not able to respond appropriately.

Pupils are responding enthusiastically to new initiatives such as 'feedback friends' and 'plenary prefects' which have been introduced to reduce the amount of time that they spend listening to the teacher. These initiatives are quite recent and have yet to be embedded in all classes.

A new planning format means that all teachers now identify the pupils' levels and the activities they have planned for different groups. Monitoring shows that this is leading to some teachers having higher expectations of pupils and providing activities that are better matched to their needs. A teacher has been employed to support the more able pupils in mathematics and writing, and the school's data indicates that this is starting to accelerate their progress.

The mathematics subject leader has implemented a range of strategies to support teachers to improve their teaching. Weekly planning includes the appropriate mathematical words that pupils will use and vocabulary displays are evident in all classrooms. The subject leader's planning scrutiny evidence shows that teachers are more often building mathematical opportunities into other subjects. Weekly 'Big Maths' lessons are providing a focussed opportunity for pupils to practise mental mathematics skills.

Governors have responded positively to the external review of governance and are increasingly involved in making decisions about whole school issues. They have appointed a new clerk and a range of training has been organised. Minutes of meetings are detailed and record the questions that governors are asking senior leaders about the school. A more detailed headteacher's report and an improved relationship with the school mean that governors have a better understanding of how different groups of pupils are achieving. They are beginning to visit the school to find out how well it is performing but this is not yet regular or focussed.

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

- ensure that in writing pupils respond to the teachers' comments and improve their most recent piece of writing
- review marking in Key Stage 1 to include more visual prompts to encourage pupils to be more independent
- ensure governors develop a focused timetable for monitoring activities in order to find out for themselves how the school is performing.

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 local authority has provided good support and challenge for the school, which has strengthened the senior leadership team's capacity to tackle the areas of weakness. Senior and middle leaders have benefited from support to develop their monitoring skills from the local authority and from the local leader of education. Teachers have found recent training they have attended for improving teaching particularly helpful.

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

Yours sincerely

Rachel Howie
Her Majesty's Inspector