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Cieran Flaherty
Headteacher
St Anthony's Catholic Primary School
Fordbridge Road
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Dear Mr Flaherty

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Anthony's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 24 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 March. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with yourself and the deputy headteacher, the Chair of 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 along with a range of other documents including the school's tracking data and feedback to teachers from lesson observations. Together with the deputy headteacher, we visited six classrooms to talk to pupils and to look at the work in their books

Context

Since the last inspection three teachers have resigned, one has left the school and the other two will be leaving in July. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in May and an assistant headteacher and two other teachers have been appointed for September. The assistant headteacher is a new role in the school. It has been

created to provide additional capacity within the leadership team. There have been significant changes in the governing body. A new, experienced Chair has very recently been appointed, along with two new parent governors and a local authority governor. Two foundation governor posts are currently in the process of being filled.

Main findings

You and the senior leaders have an accurate view of the schools' areas for development and have acted decisively in responding to the issues raised in the recent inspection. The school's new action plan is appropriately focussed on tackling these issues. It clearly sets out the short and medium term actions to be taken but the timescales are not detailed enough. The plan identifies the senior leaders and teaching staff who will check the effectiveness of the actions but governors are not yet included in these monitoring activities. The success criteria are not sufficiently sharply defined to measure accurately the impact of the actions on the pupils' progress.

A range of strategies has been implemented to support teachers in regularly checking how well pupils are doing in lessons. These include a new approach to the structuring of lessons and training for teachers on how to ask questions that are more effective. Evidence from the school's monitoring and from my visits to classrooms show that, whilst all teachers are implementing these strategies, they are not yet fully embedded in all year groups. Senior leaders have accurately identified where more support is needed and are taking appropriate action. Pupils are taking more responsibility for assessing their own learning and a range of strategies for this was evident across the school.

Mathematics books show that pupils are regularly responding to the comments teachers make and this is helping them to make better progress from one lesson to the next. Marking in all the English books I looked at was detailed and provided pupils with some very helpful advice about how to improve their work. However, pupils were not responding to these suggestions because teachers had already made the improvements for them when they marked their books.

The recently appointed mathematics leader has been proactive in developing a clear understanding of pupils' performance through careful analysis of the data and looking at teachers' planning and at pupils' books. She has provided a number of teachers with support to improve their practice. The literacy leader left the school earlier in the year and the new assistant headteacher will take up this role in September.

After a review of procedures, plans are now in place to set teachers targets that are directly linked to measurable increases in pupils' progress. This will be in place from September. Teachers whose practice requires improvement have been provided with a range of intensive support. The schools' monitoring of these teachers shows that some improvements have been made but their teaching is still not yet good.

There has been a period of turbulence within the governing body with a number of resignations and several new appointments. A new, experienced Chair of Governors has been appointed and has organised an external review of governance to identify the areas where additional training is required. The Chair is aware of the areas in which the school needs to improve and how the school compares to schools nationally. With local authority support, governors have set up a post Ofsted scrutiny group, which will start to monitor the improvements the school is making.

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 the action plan has clearly defined timescales, and that it contains well defined success criteria, so that governors can check if senior leaders' actions are helping pupils to make better progress
- make sure that pupils are able to make the improvements in their writing that teachers suggest in their marking
- provide an appropriate level of induction training to ensure all governors have a clear understanding of how pupils are achieving and what actions the school is taking to improve.

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 the school with appropriate level of support and will be conducting a review of teaching and learning on 5 July 2013 to identify what further resources are needed to support improvement. The school has made links with five other schools and has accessed a range of useful training for teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Rachel Howie
Her Majesty's Inspector