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11 July 2013

Mrs P Lund
Headteacher
Our Lady and St Hubert's Roman Catholic Primary School, Great Harwood
Hallfield Road
off Harwood Lane
Great Harwood
Blackburn
Lancashire
BB6 7SN

Dear Mrs Lund

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Our Lady and St Hubert's Roman Catholic Primary School, Great Harwood, Lancashire

Following my visit to your school on 10 July 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 in May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, another senior leader, the Chair and three other members of the Governing Body, representatives from the local authority and a group of pupils. I evaluated the school action plan and scrutinised other key documentation. I also had the opportunity to accompany you on a tour of the school.

Context

Since the last inspection, the existing Reception and Year 1 teacher have secured new positions and new appointments have been made to replace them from September.

Main findings

You have guided the school community successfully through a very difficult period over recent months and staff morale is now high. Although disappointed by the last inspection judgement, you recognise it as, 'absolutely fair', and have been able to use its findings to galvanize staff. The higher expectations that you have set them have already led to a change of culture where teachers now feel a greater sense of responsibility for the progress of their own pupils.

The school's action plan, which has been written in response to the recent inspection, focuses closely on the areas for improvement which were highlighted. It gives a detailed account of actions but there is not enough focus on what the impact of these will be. Also, it is not always clear who is responsible for leading, monitoring and evaluating these actions.

You are very clear about the reasons for the drop in pupils' achievement last year and the significant improvement in the recent Year 6 results demonstrates that this is certainly not a trend. Robust tracking of pupils' progress shows that this improvement is evident in all year groups. Since the last inspection, tracking information is being used much more effectively to analyse the performance of particular groups and of individual pupils. There is now an expectation that every teacher will step in and take appropriate action, to ensure that all their pupils are making the best possible progress.

The pupils I spoke to felt that the teachers were focusing more on helping them to improve their writing, which reflects the higher expectations you now have in this area. Although some felt they had been doing more practical activities, they expressed very strong opinions about how much time was spent just listening to their teacher talking. They were frustrated about how long it was taking at the start of a lesson before they actually got involved with their own learning. As one pupil put it very clearly, 'it's just boring sitting on the carpet.' All teachers are using the new marking and feedback procedures but not necessarily in an effective way. When I looked at pupils' books it was clear that too many 'green for growth' comments were vague, unhelpful and did not explain specifically what was required in order to improve. Also, pupils were not always been given time to act upon these comments.

Governors are rising to the challenge of the recent inspection judgement; in fact they welcome it, as it has given them the impetus to change how they work. As the Chair of the Governing Body explained, 'in the past, we were afraid of overstepping the mark,' but it is clear that now they feel empowered to work alongside senior leaders in order to bring about the required improvements. The newly formed standards and effectiveness committee is already enabling them to 'dig deeper' than they previously have done on pupils' achievement.

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:

- sharpen the school action plan so it is clear about who is responsible for leading and monitoring the various actions, and explains how the impact of these will be evaluated

- ensure that all staff use the marking and feedback procedures effectively
- ensure that all staff understand how to enable pupils to become more actively involved in their own learning.

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

Prior to the recent inspection, the local authority had only provided light-touch support to the school. This has now been stepped up and the school advisor and a member of the monitoring and intervention team have spent a considerable amount of time in school. Recent joint lesson observations with senior leaders showed that it is too early to see any impact following the training session on features of good teaching. The local authority has brokered a link with an advanced skills teacher and from September 2013 a teaching and learning consultant will be working with staff on a fortnightly basis.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Seneviratne

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority - including where the school is an academy
- Diocese - for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- The lead inspector.