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24 September 2013

Mrs Carol Hind
Headteacher
St Patrick's Catholic Primary School
Littledale Avenue
Heysham
Morecambe
LA3 2ER

Dear Mrs Hind

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23 September 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's most recent monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school was judged as having serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in September 2012. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

I recommend that the school's next inspection is carried out under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Interim Executive Director for Children & Young People for Lancashire and the Director of Education for Lancaster Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Gornall

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2012

- Improve teaching so it is consistently good or better by:
 - making better use of time in lessons so learning moves at a quicker pace
 - making sure that work is at the right level for pupils of different abilities
 - providing teachers with more training in how to develop pupils' reading and writing skills.

- Improve pupils' progress in reading and writing, particularly for boys, by:
 - targeting support for families of pupils with low attendance
 - using a step-by-step approach to developing key skills in handwriting, spelling and punctuation
 - increasing pupils' ability to use and apply their reading skills in other subjects
 - teaching older pupils the skill of reading between the lines and to read with greater understanding
 - building pupils' stamina as writers so they are more confident in writing at length.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - strengthening skills in judging the impact each teacher has on pupils' learning and using this information to set targets for teachers' further training and support
 - ensuring senior leaders provide more support for subject leaders to develop their leadership skills.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 23 September 2013

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders for English and mathematics and the Chair of the Governing Body. Informal discussions were held with pupils and other staff. The school's records of leaders' recent observations of teaching were considered, along with monitoring reports from the local authority. A range of documents was considered, including the school's analysis of pupils' performance in 2013 and the behaviour incident log. The school's single central record was reviewed and its wider safeguarding arrangements were considered.

Context

One teacher left the school in summer 2013. There has been some reorganisation of staffing. A new teacher has been appointed to teach Year 3.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Governors continue to be well informed about the work of the school and do not shrink from asking challenging questions. The standards and effectiveness committee monitors pupils' progress across the school and evaluates the impact of leaders' spending, for instance, of pupil premium funding. Governors provide the headteacher with appropriate and effective support for strategic decision making and have a regular presence within the school. They are ambitious for the school's future and use their individual and professional skills to good effect.

The headteacher continues to provide clear direction. Her commitment to the pupils is very evident and shared by her staff. This is an inclusive school with a high incidence of pupil admissions at times other than the usual starting points. Pupils are warmly welcomed and swiftly integrated into the school. Leaders ensure that pupils' skills are assessed rapidly when they enter the school in order that teachers and support staff can plan effectively to meet their needs. The headteacher and her deputy model effective ways of working, coach staff and communicate consistently high expectations. They are now providing better opportunities for subject leaders to drive school improvement.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Continuing improvements to teaching underpin a strong trajectory of improvement in pupils' outcomes. Provisional results for 2013 indicate that pupils' average points scores have risen strongly in Key Stage 1 over the last three years. Most pupils made at least expected progress in Key Stage 2, in reading, writing and mathematics, leaving Year 6 with standards that are similar to those achieved by pupils nationally in 2012. Performance is securely above floor standards and the progress of vulnerable groups, including Gypsy Roma, Travellers and those supported by the pupil premium has accelerated. The school's projections indicate a continued picture of improvement. The tracking of pupils' progress is regular, rigorous and used by teachers as the basis for their planning.

- There is a strong focus on evaluating and adjusting teaching to meet the needs of different groups of pupils and individuals. Leaders' expectations of teachers are high. 'Non-negotiables' are in place in all classes and provide teachers with clear guidance. This means that pupils are aware of how they should behave and the standard of work that is expected of them. Leaders regularly monitor the work of different classes and provide helpful feedback to teachers.
- Teachers' marking is of a high standard and in many cases builds dialogue with pupils as to how they can improve their work. Most pupils are proud of their work and keen to talk about it. Teachers ensure that pupils have opportunities to reflect on and celebrate their achievements.
- Partnerships have been forged to drive a culture of raised aspirations that is evident in school. There is good support for pupils as they enter the next phase of their education. In 2013 all of the pupils leaving Year 6 progressed to high school, for the first time in the school's history. Sixth formers from a local high school are mentoring Year 6 pupils to encourage them to see education as an enjoyable and challenging long-term process.
- A strong emphasis on values has a positive effect on pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. The school's participation in initiatives such as AfriTwin broadens pupils' cultural awareness. Pupils value the opportunities they have to make a difference in school through leadership roles, for instance where Year 6 pupils act as buddies to those in Reception.
- Wise investment in stimulating resources, including a new reading scheme and mathematics programs, is making learning more challenging and fun for pupils. The school environment has been improved through redecoration and the remodelling of the entrance area.
- The school's intensive work to promote good attendance has resulted in an improvement of over two percentage points in attendance figures in 2012-13 in comparison with the previous year. The attendance of Gypsy Roma and Traveller pupils has improved and fewer are persistently absent from school than was previously the case.
- Subject leadership has been strengthened through the provision of additional opportunities, particularly for English and mathematics leaders, to work with the rest of the staff to discuss improvements to teaching and introduce new resources. These leaders have more opportunities to observe and work alongside their colleagues. Their attendance at senior leadership meetings indicates their accountability and the value of their work in raising standards.
- Appraisal has been strengthened. Teachers receive helpful feedback following lesson observations by senior leaders. There is a robust system for ensuring linkage between individual and whole school objectives.
- The school works very effectively with other agencies, including the local children's centres, to ensure that obstacles to children's learning are identified and reduced.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Opportunities for staff to observe and learn from each other's practice have only recently been introduced.

External support

The local authority continues to provide well-judged support that meets the needs of the school. Recent training for teachers on how to lead subjects effectively has been well received and has led to teachers having more confidence in influencing the work of their colleagues. Consultant support is being provided to assist the Reception staff in improving the literacy skills of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. A local authority consultant has provided useful support to teachers who are teaching different age groups from those they taught last year. An adviser continues to support and challenge the Governing Body through attendance at the meetings of its standards and effectiveness committee. The Gypsy Roma Traveller Service is working with families to improve the attendance of pupils and thereby boost their achievement.