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Mrs J Warren
Headteacher
St Augustine's Catholic Primary School
Wilman Road
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Kent
TN4 9AL

Dear Mrs Warren

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

Following my visit to your school on 7 October 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 July 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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:

- provide a robust and sharply focused programme of coaching for each teacher, with a view to ensuring that teaching becomes securely good well within this academic year
- develop the work of middle leaders, including those with responsibility for age phases and subjects.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, members of the governing body and representatives of the local authority and archdiocese. I made a brief visit to a lesson in every class with you and looked at pupils' work. I evaluated key documents, including the school's action plan and local authority notes of visit.

Main findings

The outcome of the inspection was expected by you and the deputy headteacher. You and he were already working effectively together on addressing many of the most important issues. You are on the right track. However, the challenges are considerable.

The school's action plan is detailed and it is bringing about improvement. Working with the local authority, you have already put together a programme for coaching and supporting teachers to improve their practice. We agreed that this programme must go further still and be more intensive, with immediate effect. There is no time to lose. Governors are rightly committed to providing any necessary funding.

Teachers work hard but are not always sure enough of how to challenge and inspire all pupils; their expectations of pupils remain too low. The lessons we observed together were suitably managed, so pupils knew what they had to do. However, too often, the tasks for pupils appeared straightforward, limiting the pupils' learning. Teachers must ensure that assessments of pupils are used well to provide them with challenging work. We discussed the importance of providing the pupils of real experiences of what they are learning about, sometimes outside the classroom, rather than too many worksheets. It was good to hear of the recent Year 6 residential visit. As you pointed out, teachers' marking requires improvement, so that pupils know how to make their work better.

You, and the deputy headteacher, are making sensible changes to organisational matters. For example, you have made the performance management of teachers more rigorous. You have ensured that teachers understand how much progress pupils should be expected to make each year. You realise that middle leaders need to develop their work considerably, so that they can lead subject and phase teams. This work is planned for and has begun. We also usefully discussed how to evaluate the value for money of certain types of expenditure; as well as different models of managing the work of the three-class teams, which operate in all years from Year 1 upwards. It will be useful to continue to consider these matters.

The governing body has sustained the improvements in its work. With you, it provides useful information to parents. Governors ask astute and focused questions of senior staff. With your support, they have increased the number of visits they

make to the school, so they have better first-hand knowledge. You and the governors agreed with me that the current action plan needs to be broadened during the year. It should not only deal with the weaknesses identified at the inspection, but incorporate the school's wider vision, such as making the curriculum deeper and more exciting across all subjects. Governors should take specific roles in monitoring and evaluating the impact of the new school improvement plan.

The attainment of pupils is mixed throughout the school. National test results in Key Stages 1 and 2 improved last year and were above average. The same was true of the Year 1 phonics screening. However, it is not certain that these outcomes can be sustained in 2014, or that pupils' current progress is sufficient. There is notable underachievement in some year groups, including in Year 5. The performance of different groups of pupils is mixed, too. This is why the teaching must improve so that all pupils make good progress from their starting points. It is good to note, however, how much more sharply organised the provision is for pupils entitled to pupil premium funding. The gap between their performance, and that of other pupils, shows signs of closing.

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

Since the inspection, the local authority has usefully increased its work with the school. Helpfully, it has brokered coaching for teachers and mentoring for phase leaders. The archdiocese also has valuable expertise and advice to share. You have also developed constructive links with other schools. Together with the firm backing of governors, you have a good range of channels of advice and support. You will need to manage this carefully to maximise its impact.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Kent and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector