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Carol McIvor  
Headteacher  
St Mary's Catholic Primary School  
Ann's Hill Road  
Gosport  
Hampshire  
PO12 3NB

Dear Miss McIvor

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 14 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 not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. With the support of the local authority and the Diocese, senior leaders and governors should act with a greater sense of urgency to bring about improvements. The school's post-Ofsted improvement plan needs to be revised so that it reflects how the governing body will hold leaders and managers to account for improving the overall effectiveness of the school and for raising standards. The plan also requires strengthening so that it:

- identifies who is responsible for leading initiatives
- includes actions that are specific
- communicates higher expectations for pupils at Key Stage 1
- clearly identifies where actions are needed to support the achievement of particular groups of pupils

- includes more measurable targets, including for the progress made by different groups of pupils every half term
- specifies what teachers need to do to become at least consistently good practitioners.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I held discussions over the telephone with representatives of the local authority and the Diocese. I evaluated the school's post-Ofsted improvement plan. We made brief observations of classes together and looked at a sample of pupils' books. I also checked the school's records of the suitability of staff to work with children.

## **Context**

There have been no contextual changes at the school except that a newly qualified teacher started working at the school in September 2013.

## **Main findings**

Together with the governing body you have found it difficult to accept the outcomes of the section 5 inspection. Despite recognising that the areas for improvement identified in the report are the right priorities for the school, you are not tackling them with sufficient urgency. You and the deputy headteacher have put in place systems aimed at tracking and monitoring more rigorously the progress made by pupils. However, it is too soon to see the difference this and other planned initiatives are making. Senior leaders have worked with staff to review and update policies related to marking, feedback and the use of assessment. While some staff have started to implement the agreed changes, others have not. Senior leaders need to ensure that all staff comply fully with the revised policies.

The school's post-Ofsted improvement plan identifies what senior leaders hope to improve. However, the plan does not identify in sufficient detail: how improvements will be made; who is responsible for leading initiatives; how improvements will be measured and the frequency with which progress will be checked. Furthermore, the plan does not show how governors will challenge and hold senior leaders to account, especially about the outcomes for different groups of pupils. Shortcomings in the plan are slowing the school's progress towards becoming good.

There are still too few governors on the governing body and five vacancies for foundation governors. Consequently, the governing body is operating below its full strength and this contributes to governance not becoming more effective. The Chair

and the Vice-Chair of the Governing body have been proactive in trying to recruit additional governors. To date, they have recruited one potential candidate, but are still waiting for the Diocese to approve the appointment.

Although governors question senior leaders about the underperformance of pupils, they do not ask sufficiently challenging questions. They do not for example check on the achievement of different groups of pupils. The Chair of the Governing Body recognises that the governing body needs to become more proactive and more challenging, and that governors should compare the progress made by pupils with schools nationally. As a matter of urgency, governors need to attend training provided by the local authority and the Diocese to help them to develop their role, including their ability to interpret school and national data about pupil performance.

The school continues to ensure that safeguarding requirements are met.

Ofsted will 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 provides senior leaders and staff with helpful support and guidance. This enabled the senior leadership team to draft a school improvement plan and teachers to begin to improve aspects of how they teach English and mathematics. There are links with other schools to help staff to develop their practice. However, most new initiatives are in their infancy and it is too soon to see their impact on outcomes for pupils.

You appreciate the guidance and support you receive from the Diocese. However, the school would benefit from the local authority and the Diocese working in closer partnership in order to strengthen governance and to help increase the school's capacity to become good. The Diocese should consider becoming more directly involved with the school to help accelerate improvements.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Hampshire and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth.

Yours sincerely

Gehane Gordelier  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**