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Mrs F Nelis
St Patrick's Catholic Voluntary Academy
Barnsley Road
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
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Dear Mrs Nelis

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Patrick's Catholic Voluntary Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 11 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy 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 academy should take further action to:

- Extend the use of personal development plans to all teachers in order to identify personalised training and support for each one.
- Further improve the written feedback to teachers so that there is greater precision in identifying how their performance can be improved.
- Extend the use of the headteacher's termly report to governors to identify progress with each area requiring improvement.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, five members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. A telephone conversation was held with a diocesan representative. All classrooms were visited and some pupils' exercise books

were scrutinised. The school improvement plans were evaluated along with other school documentation including records from lesson observations.

Context

There have been a small number of changes since the last inspection. One teacher left and a newly qualified teacher joined. Although the number of pupils has remained similar the organisation of pupils has changed so that there is one class fewer in Key Stage 2.

Main findings

Issues are being tackled with urgency. There is a new approach to the teaching of writing which includes the introduction of 'Fantastic Fridays', where pupils are exposed to an exciting stimulus for writing. For example, Year 6 pupils were planning writing about fantasy animals after watching a video and reading about such creatures. Pupils are already commenting that this is helping to improve the content of their writing and although introduced relatively recently this is having a demonstrable effect on the quantity and quality of written work produced for many pupils. A more robust and rigorous approach to checking on the impact of improvements means that senior leaders know where most improvement is needed. Improvement plans are sound and systematically tackle issues requiring improvement. There are individual plans in place for a small number of teachers but not for all, even where aspects of their work could be improved. Lessons are evaluated soundly and teachers are routinely provided with written evaluations which identify areas for improvement. Although these are sometimes precise this is not always the case and sometimes comments are too general.

The headteacher provides governors with a good range of information, including her analysis of pupil progress and a detailed termly report. However, there is scope to extend the use of the headteacher's termly report to highlight progress with the issues requiring improvement. Governors have a clear understanding of their role and are aware that their skills at challenging senior leaders could be developed further. Although some governors understand school data others indicate they would welcome further training in understanding data and how this could be used as the starting point for holding leaders to account.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the academy until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

Senior leaders and members of staff engage appropriately with other, more effective schools and academies and readily access support from the diocese. Although in its infancy there has been some work with academies in the All Saints Academy Trust to provide training for individual teachers. The local authority has provided some

support; for example in moderating assessment levels and in working with the mathematics subject leader.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Sheffield, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hallam and the Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

Amraz Ali

Her Majesty's Inspector