

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancs Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566930
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email: hcarnall@cfbt.com



23 October 2013

Mrs Cathy Quinn
Headteacher
St John Bosco RC Primary School
Hall Moss Road
Blackley
Manchester
M9 7AT

Dear Mrs Quinn,

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St John Bosco RC Primary School, Manchester

Following my visit to your school on 22 October 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings. 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.

This visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Having considered the evidence made available to me I am of the opinion that 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:

- Continue to drive forward the implementation of the school's marking policy so that all teachers' marking is up to the standard of the best in the school. Making sure that teachers' feedback focuses distinctly on what the pupils have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. In addition teachers should give pupils the opportunity to respond to their teachers' comments in a timely fashion.
- Sharpen the strategy for observing lessons so that greater emphasis is given to the impact that teaching is having on pupils' learning and in particular the progress being made by the different groups of pupils in the class.
- Tweak the school development plan so that the milestones related to achievement indicate clearly the progress being made by the different groups of pupils in the school.

Evidence

During this visit meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and the subject leader for mathematics. I also met with the Chair of Governors and held separate telephone calls with a representative of the local authority and

the Roman Catholic Diocese of Salford. These meetings and conversations enabled me to discuss the actions taken to improve the school since my previous visit and, more importantly, evaluate their impact.

I took the opportunity to review the most up-to-date school development plan, minutes of governing body meetings held since my previous visit and records of lesson observations carried out by you and your colleagues this term. I scrutinised the work in a selection of pupils' books. I paid particular attention to the work done in literacy and mathematics and I also evaluated the quality of teachers' marking. You accompanied me on a tour of the school where we made a number of short visits to lessons observing pupils diligently involved in a range of activities related to mathematics.

Context

Since my previous visit you have returned to your full-time post after an unavoidable absence. In September four teachers joined the staff. One is working in the Early Years Foundation Stage, another in Key Stage 1 and two are working with pupils in Key Stage 2. One of the Key Stage 2 appointments has enabled you to provide additional teaching in Year 3 with the expressed aim of improving the literacy and numeracy of pupils in this year group.

In addition to the effective link with a local outstanding school that was in place at the time of my previous visit you have forged a connection with another outstanding school. This connection has enabled you and your colleagues to share good practice in relation to developing newly qualified teachers' expertise in their first year of teaching. Although this association between the two schools has only been in place for a short time you are already seeing positive benefits. For example in the classroom practice of those members of staff who are new entrants to the profession.

Main findings

Since my previous visit the 2013 results for Key Stages 1 and 2 have become available. Although these results have yet to be confirmed they provide an early indication of how well the pupils performed at the end of each key stage last year.

Attainment at Key Stage 1 declined in 2013 in reading, writing and mathematics. This was largely due to the under attainment of those pupils with special needs. The attainment of boys was above that of the girls in all three subjects. This is the reverse of what happened in 2012 and bucks the national trend. The gap in attainment between pupils entitled to free school meals and their peers in the school was comparable to the national figure in mathematics and reading but wider in writing. These results are disappointing and suggest there is still work to be done in Key Stage 1 to ensure the needs of the different groups of pupils are adequately met.

At Key Stage 2 the proportion of pupils who attained a Level 4 or higher in English and reading in 2013 was comparable to what it was in 2012. However in mathematics the proportion of pupils achieving at this level increased by 14 percentage points to 79%. In addition the proportion of pupils making expected progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 rose by 24 percentage points to 92%. Consequently, in 2013, expected progress in mathematics was above average having been significantly below it the year before. This

improvement suggests that the actions being taken by leaders and managers to improve this area of the curriculum are having a positive impact on outcomes.

The teaching of mathematics continues to improve. Learning intentions are shared with the pupils at the start of each lesson so that they know what is expected of them. Consequently teachers are able to monitor pupils' progress against these intentions as the lesson proceeds. Teachers plan to meet the needs of all pupils by making suitable adjustments to learning activities and utilising a range of resources. This is enabling more able pupils to develop in-depth knowledge and understanding of mathematics and as a result apply it to new and unfamiliar problems. Conversely for those pupils who find mathematics challenging teaching assistants are effectively deployed to provide valuable support to help pupils grasp the basic ideas. To give learning in mathematics purpose teachers set problems in real life contexts. As a result pupils work hard, show resilience when finding solutions to thought-provoking questions and demonstrate good attitudes to learning.

Marking of pupils' books, seen as an area for further development at my previous visit, is continuing to improve. Pupils' work is now marked regularly and in the best examples teachers' comments give information about what the pupil has done well and what they need to do to improve. However, this practice is still not consistent across the school. Where marking is weak teachers' comments lack precision and provide pupils with too little information about how they can make their work better. There are also examples where pupils have been directed to correct a piece of work and they have failed to do so. When this happens pupils' progress slows and gaps in their knowledge and understanding are not adequately addressed.

Since your return the pace of change has accelerated. As requested in my first letter of visit you have refined the school development plan. It sets out your immediate and long term plans for improving the school and provides a clear road map to guide the school on its journey of improvement. Leaders and managers roles and responsibilities have been clarified and there are clear lines of accountability. However, the milestones related to pupils' achievement are not specific enough. This is because they relate to whole cohort measures of success and are not broken down into groups; for example separate measures for boys and girls. As a consequence the checks made on pupils' progress lack precision.

Since my previous visit you have introduced a system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. Middle leaders have received training to enable them to make judgements about the standards of teachers' practice in the classroom and the progress that pupils make over time. As a result you are able to hold staff rigorously to account for the quality of their work.

However, evidence from monitoring records indicates that when lessons are observed too much emphasis is placed on what the teacher is doing and not enough on the impact that teaching is having on pupils' progress and, in particular, the progress made by groups of pupils. Management records suggest that there is no inadequate teaching in the school but that there are still pockets of practice that require improvement. Consequently you have put in place appropriate support to help improve the performance of those staff whose teaching is not yet of the required standard.

Governors have reviewed their practice since my previous visit. The curriculum committee has been given the responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the revised development plan; holding you and your colleagues rigorously to account for the effectiveness of the

actions being taken to improve the school. As a result they are supporting your drive to secure improvement and maintain the rapid rate of transformation that is required if the school is to be judged at least good at its next inspection.

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

The local authority continues to take an active role in supporting the senior leadership in their drive to improve the school. A local authority officer has been commissioned to visit the school for one day each term to provide an external view of how well the school is performing and determine the impact of actions taken by senior leaders to make the school better. The local authority forged the successful link between St John Bosco and a local outstanding school to support improvements in mathematics. More recently you have established an effective link with colleagues in another outstanding school to share good practice in relation to the induction and professional development of newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Charles Lowry
Her Majesty's Inspector