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Nikki Stevens
St Teresa's Catholic Primary School, Hawkwell
Ashingdon Road
Rochford
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Dear Mrs Stevens

Monitoring inspection visit under Section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to St Teresa's Catholic Primary School, Hawkwell, Essex local authority.

Following my visit to your school on 24 October 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection on 13 January 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors. I had a telephone discussion with a representative from the local authority. We toured the classrooms together and looked in some of the pupils' books. I reviewed documents including attainment data and records of monitoring.

Main findings

The proportion of Year 1 pupils who achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check was average in the most recent check. However, the proportion of Year 2 pupils who achieved the expected standard was well below average. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 broadly improved in the 2013. However attainment at the end of Year 6 fell in 2013 and too few pupils made expected or better progress from their levels at the end of Year 2 in

reading, mathematics and particularly in writing. Gaps in attainment between pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding and other pupils are too wide, particularly in writing.

The school has introduced new ways of teaching writing and leaders are hopeful that this will result in better attainment. It is too soon however to see the impact of this development. School data suggests that too few pupils are currently working at the expected level for their age, particularly in Year 6.

Leaders have worked successfully to ensure that teachers' assessments of progress and attainment are accurate. Leaders hold teachers to account for pupils' progress in termly meetings. The assistant headteacher explores gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills by looking closely at pupils' work in their books. She provides guidance to teachers on what needs to improve. This scrutiny of pupils' books is thorough and helpful.

The monitoring of teaching in lessons is not rigorous enough. Leaders judge teaching and learning in lessons during planned observations each term. The headteacher also drops in to lessons to see pupils at work. Some teachers receive feedback to help them improve but records show this is not always the case. Some of the headteacher's evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning are too generous because they do not take enough account of the progress all pupils make in their lessons. Leaders use coaching methods to improve teaching however, some of the teachers' targets for improvement are too generic. Although teachers' targets relate to the school's priority to improve teaching in writing, leaders do not use evidence from lesson observations well enough to identify the most urgent and specific areas for improvement.

Leaders track pupils' progress but the analysis of this information is not always deep enough to ensure that the school targets its resources well to improve matters quickly. For example, leaders track the progress and attainment of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding but do not always compare this to the achievement of other pupils to identify the gaps in attainment.

Governance is improving and members of the governing body ask pertinent questions relating to the achievement data they scrutinize. Governors are ambitious for the school and know that pupils' attainment needs to improve. Governors visit the school more regularly to see lessons, talk to pupils and look at their books. There has been a review of governance and there is now an improvement plan for governors to become more effective. Governors do not have a clear enough view about the progress and attainment of some vulnerable groups including those pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding.

Leaders have reviewed the school's improvement plans but there are still not enough progress and attainment targets in each year group to help governors and others check the school's success in improving achievement.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, I recommend that further action is taken to:

- ensure school improvement plans include targets for the progress and attainment of each year group in reading, writing and mathematics
- ensure that leaders, including governors, rigorously check the progress and attainment of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding and allocate resources to close the gaps in attainment
- ensure that leaders' evaluations of teaching and learning are accurate and take full account of the progress all pupils make in their lessons
- ensure that teachers receive the training they need to address weaknesses identified as a result of the monitoring of teaching and learning.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority has alerted leaders, including governors to its serious and well-founded concerns about the progress pupils are making. It continues to monitor the school and provide guidance to improve leadership. A recent local authority review of teaching and learning provides helpful guidance to school leaders about what is going well and what needs to improve. It does not however give clear feedback about the quality of teaching overall.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Brentwood and the Director of Children's Services for Essex.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Winter
Her Majesty's Inspector