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12 November 2013

Mrs Susan Wass
Headteacher
St Thomas More RC Primary School
St Thomas More Road
Hull
HU4 7NP

Dear Mrs Wass

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Thomas More RC Primary School, Kingston upon Hull City

Following my visit to your school on 11 November 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 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:

- Identify how teaching will be further improved and specifically how teachers' expectations will be raised and how planned tasks will always be at the right level to challenge pupils of all abilities.
- Draw up a detailed plan for checking on the impact of improvement activities.
- Develop more formal partnerships with other, better performing schools.
- Draw up plans for improving the performance of individual teachers.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, four members of the Governing Body and a representative of the diocese. A telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority was also undertaken. All classrooms were visited. The school improvement plans were evaluated along with other school documentation including records from lesson observations.

Context

Since the inspection in July 2013 there have been a small number of contextual changes. Two part-time teachers left the school and a newly qualified teacher recruited to teach one of the classes.

Main findings

Performance management is being used to hold all teachers to account for the learning and progress of pupils. Lessons are monitored more rigorously so that if a lesson is evaluated as requiring improvement the teacher concerned knows that further observations of their work will be undertaken until improvements are evident. The headteacher has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas requiring improvement and correctly identifies the need for greater consistency in the application of agreed school policies and procedures. Although improvement plans are sound, it is not clear how further improvements to teaching and learning will be systematically brought about, specifically in ensuring that tasks challenge all ability groups in all lessons and in raising the expectations of all teachers. Plans include some work with other schools, but as yet no formal partnerships have been established with better performing schools.

Although there has clearly been some improvements to checking on the impact of planned improvements there is not a detailed plan to demonstrate how the impact of all improvements will be checked over time. There have been some improvements to the role of leaders; the literacy and numeracy coordinators have had training and are clear about their roles in raising standards. They have begun to provide governors with reports about their work but this work is too recent to have impacted on achievement and learning over time. Although there has been increased staff development related to improving the quality of teaching, this training is for all teachers and there are no individual plans for teachers whose work has been identified as requiring improvement.

Governors are clear about their role and what leaders are doing to bring about improvement. They are only too aware of the potential impact of turbulence in staffing and are keen to work with the local authority and diocese to ensure that any future staffing difficulties do not impede improvements.

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 has provided appropriate support and the local authority officer knows the school well. The local authority correctly identifies that the school remains in need of on-going support. Members of the school improvement service have delivered staff training and worked with individual teachers and leaders. Consequently, the literacy and numeracy leaders have a clear understanding of their role and have begun to report their evaluations to governors.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Kingston upon Hull City Council and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Middlesbrough.

Yours sincerely

Amraz Ali

Her Majesty's Inspector