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22 November 2013

Miss V Fraher
Headteacher
St Edward's RC Primary School
Lisson Grove
London
NW1 6LH

Dear Miss Fraher

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of St Edward's RC Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22 November 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in May 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weakness designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Westminster and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Westminster.

Yours sincerely

Marcia Headon
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is good or better by making sure that all staff:
 - make the purpose of lessons clear to pupils so they know what they are expected to learn
 - have high expectations of what pupils can do and plan tasks which make them think hard, especially the more able
 - spend less time talking to the whole class and give pupils more time to work by themselves to apply the skills they have been taught
 - move lessons along at a brisker pace
 - provide clear guidance in their marking on how pupils can improve their work which is linked to National Curriculum levels and the aims of lessons
 - ensure pupils act on the guidance given to them in the marking of their work.
- Raise achievement, especially in writing at Key Stage 2, by:
 - showing pupils, in imaginative ways, how to extend their writing skills
 - encouraging pupils to write for a wide range of reasons and at length
 - ensuring pupils have more opportunities to use their writing skills in different subjects.
- Ensure that leaders and managers:
 - forge stronger relationships with parents so that they are more involved in their children's learning
 - improve action planning to bring about more rapid improvements, especially in writing
 - fully implement the revised performance management systems to link teachers' rewards more closely to the quality of their teaching.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 22 November 2013

Evidence

The inspector met with the interim headteacher, deputy headteacher, inclusion manager and the Chair of the Governing Body. She held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. The inspector observed six lessons jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. In lessons, the inspector talked to pupils and viewed their work. The inspector scrutinised documentation to show evidence of the work done to improve the school. This included the school's improvement plans and information about the progress pupils are making. She considered a sample of books containing examples of the writing completed by pupils from all year groups. She checked the single central register, which contains details of the safeguarding checks made on staff.

Context

An interim headteacher, a deputy headteacher and inclusion manager all joined the school in September 2013. Five new class teachers have been appointed, two of whom are newly qualified teachers. The roles and responsibilities of middle managers have been reviewed. Three new governors have been appointed. The governors are just about to begin the process for the appointment of a substantive headteacher. The Archdiocese of Westminster and the Department for Education are continuing to discuss the issue of academy status for the school.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The interim headteacher, who is highly experienced, has brought stability to the school. She has created a strong and effective senior team and together they have a very clear understanding of the need to provide leadership and direction to the school. This has now been given. The headteacher is determined to develop the skills of all staff and to encourage them to take responsibility for improving the quality of teaching. She has gained their confidence and is providing them with coaching and training where necessary.

The deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers and inclusion manager provide good support for the headteacher. They are checking the quality of teaching and learning regularly and have a good knowledge of where effective practice can be seen. They are providing personalised training and support for weaker teachers. The judgements and comments which were made by senior leaders on the quality of teaching seen in the lessons observed during the monitoring inspection, matched those of the inspector. The school now has growing capacity to continue with the improvements even after the interim headteacher leaves.

Middle leaders are beginning to take responsibility for checking the quality of work in their respective subjects. They have received training in the most effective ways to

do this. They regularly sample pupils' work through scrutiny of books and analyse information on pupils' progress. Middle leaders are being trained to ensure that the action plans, which they are drawing up for their subjects, are developmental and fit for purpose. As the middle leaders have only recently taken on these new areas of responsibility, the impact of their work has not yet been seen.

The governing body has carried out a skills audit and has been strengthened by the appointment of three new governors. It has received regular reports from the interim headteacher on the changes in the school and it is now more informed about the current position. With the interim headteacher, all governors have carried out a 'learning walk' around the school and are about to receive further training on interpreting information about pupils' attainment and progress. The governing body has created an achievement committee to check the school's progress against the targets which have been set. However, it is less clear on the intended spending of the pupil premium (funding allocated to provide extra support for pupils who are in receipt of free school meals, are in care or come from service families) or the effectiveness of the spending of this funding in the last academic year. It has also established a committee to meet with parents. It recognises that it has not always asked sufficiently robust questions nor held the school tightly to account.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The focus which has been placed on insisting that lesson objectives and learning outcomes are made explicit in each lesson, is ensuring that teachers convey a consistent message to pupils about their learning. It is also helping to improve the quality of teaching.
- The introduction of self-assessment and assessment of other pupils' work, which is seen in the majority of lessons, is making pupils much more aware of what they are being asked to do and why and raising the quality of their work.
- The school's improved analysis of the needs of different pupils is helping teachers to match work more closely to the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs or those for whom English is not their first language.
- A revision to the school's marking policy is ensuring that pupils understand better how to improve their work. Pupils know their targets. Marking is thorough, the method used is consistent across the school and pupils are developing their understanding of how to respond to comments teachers make on their work. Pupils' responses have improved over the term.
- The introduction of a new scheme of work and strategies such as the 'Big Write' are improving writing. Pupils' work shows that they write for a variety for audiences and reasons, and some pieces are of extended length. This happens across all key stages. The results in the 2013 national tests at Year 6

showed a considerable improvement in writing and are now above the national average.

- The school's insistence that each classroom has a 'working wall' has given pupils greater support. However, the quality of the working walls for literacy is much better than that of those for numeracy.
- A revised performance management system has been introduced which is well understood. It is being used to improve the quality of teaching and to hold teachers tightly to account for their work.
- The school has made a determined effort to increase its involvement with parents so that they are more involved with the pupils' learning. Celebration class assemblies are well attended, parental workshops take place and the level of communication with parents has increased.
- The approach to school improvement planning is more structured. It has involved staff and governors and the proposed actions are focused on the right issues and have given the school a clear set of priorities.
- The strong emphasis on the teaching of phonics and the work undertaken in the Early Years Foundation Stage continue to give pupils a strong start to school life.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The quality of teaching remains inconsistent. While some is good with a strong focus on learning, in other lessons pupils make much slower progress. In these lessons teachers are not always sufficiently clear about what they wish pupils to learn, they do not regularly check for understanding and some pupils are left for too long without common misconceptions being corrected.
- The school has placed more emphasis on the teaching of literacy than numeracy. Lessons in numeracy are weaker than those in literacy and this is borne out by the work in the books and the attainment in Year 6 in mathematics in the national tests in summer 2013. However, the school has recognized this as an area which now needs focus, has purchased a new mathematics scheme to help address this and intends to turn its attention more closely to this area.
- Although the school has encouraged teachers to ensure pupils are involved more actively in learning, to work in pairs and to discuss problems, pupils are still very accepting of what they are taught and do not always have enough opportunities to work on their own. Teachers sometimes provide too much support for pupils and do not always encourage them to think through problems for themselves.

- The school has only just begun to consider the most effective way for the pupil premium money for 2013–14 to be deployed. In their lesson planning, teachers do not routinely identify which pupils are entitled to this support or the best ways in which to support them.

External support

There has been regular and effective support and challenge from the local authority. It has continued to hold monthly progress meetings and to conduct helpful reviews. The language adviser has provided support for teachers to help improve their practice in teaching reading and writing. She has worked with teaching assistants to improve their skills. The local authority has also provided middle managers with advice on action planning. The Archdiocese has given good support, attending the progress meetings and discussing issues with the interim headteacher and governors. The headteacher has also accessed very appropriate support for herself and for governors from advisers from other London boroughs.