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Mrs Angela Hewkin
Headteacher
St Francis Catholic and Church of England (Aided) Primary School
Leeson Road
Ventnor
PO38 1PR

Dear Mrs Hewkin

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Francis Catholic and Church of England (Aided) 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 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 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 January 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:

- broaden the range of strategies for monitoring the quality of teaching to include regular scrutiny of pupils' work, discussions with pupils, focused observations of lessons and analysis of pupils' progress.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, your deputy headteacher, a group of teachers with leadership responsibilities and five members of the governing body. A telephone discussion took place with a representative of Hampshire local authority who is providing support and challenge for your school. The school improvement

plan was evaluated. We sampled teaching in all year groups by visiting nine lessons together. Records of your lesson observations were examined.

Main findings

Since the last inspection, you and your deputy headteacher have rightly concentrated on improving the quality of teaching. You have wisely drawn on the features of the best lessons, listed in your inspection report, and used these as a basis for staff training. When observing lessons, you have looked for these particular features to check how well they are reflected across the school. It makes perfect sense to build on the school's existing strengths in this way, in these first few months.

Teachers have had the opportunity to observe one another teach, as recommended by inspectors, so they can pick up ideas from each other. Already, there are signs that teachers are taking the training on board and trying different approaches. We saw no evidence of dull worksheets being used when we visited lessons. On the contrary, we saw some interesting activities in English and mathematics lessons that were clearly engaging the pupils. Pupils were showing a good degree of independence in several lessons; they knew exactly what was expected of them and what they were learning. We saw pupils using practical resources successfully in mathematics lessons, to help them calculate. In other lessons, pupils' learning was held back by teachers talking to the pupils, or questioning them, for too long without checking that all pupils were following and understood.

You have made a good start on developing the leadership skills of your middle leaders. They have benefited from training on data and are more involved in checking pupils' progress in classes other than their own. They have already identified some weaker aspects, from their monitoring, that they are keen to improve. Their next steps are to lead and drive necessary improvements, check at given points whether actions are working, and adjust plans accordingly. In this way, they will strengthen, and be able to demonstrate, their impact on improving teaching and pupils' achievement.

You have taken steps to check the validity of your own judgements on teaching, by observing lessons with another headteacher. Although we visited lessons for short periods, our views on the strengths and weaknesses in each session aligned well. There is a growing awareness that leaders, including governors, should use a range of approaches to check that teaching is good enough, for example through scrutinising pupils' work, talking to pupils, carrying out focused visits (for example to evaluate the learning of more able pupils) and reviewing data on pupils' progress. Broadening your approach to monitoring teaching and learning, in this way, will help governors ask pertinent questions of both senior and middle leaders to help the school on its journey to good. Your governors are rightly keen to play a strong part

in the school's improvement. They are keeping in close touch with developments, particularly those relating to the areas for improvement from the inspection.

Your school improvement plan includes measurable targets for improving teaching and pupils' progress and specifies the dates when these should be achieved during the year. These targets provide useful checkpoints for leaders and governors. The plan would benefit from greater clarity on how the school's improvement, for each priority area, will be evaluated to check that actions are working successfully. It is not entirely clear who will carry out the evaluation, how they will do it and when.

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

Hampshire local authority reacted promptly to draw up a relevant support programme for the school. Senior and middle leaders have benefited from training on data which they found very helpful. It was clear from discussions that middle leaders are already starting to put this training to good use. The local authority has given helpful advice on sharpening aspects of the school's improvement plan.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Portsmouth and Winchester Dioceses and the Director of Children's Services for Isle of Wight.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Dickinson
Her Majesty's Inspector