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2 December 2013

Mrs Colette Bland  
Headteacher  
St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School Aided  
Farrington Road  
Cullercoats  
North Shields  
Tyne and Wear  
NE30 3EY

Dear Mrs Bland

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School Aided, North Tyneside**

Following my visit to your school on 29 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 June 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:

- ensure that pupils have a good understanding of their individual learning targets and know what they have to do to achieve them.

**Evidence**

During my visit, I held meetings with you, other senior and subject leaders, pupils, members of the governing body and a senior representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan and looked at samples of pupils' work and a range of documents including minutes of governing body meetings and the outcomes of monitoring activities. You accompanied me on a tour of the school.

## **Context**

Since the inspection in June 2013 two governors have left the governing body and one vacancy has been filled. A temporary teaching assistant has been appointed.

## **Main findings**

You, and other school leaders and governors are determined that the school will improve. You are already taking successful steps to address the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report. You have revised the school improvement plan; it is detailed and identifies clearly a range of appropriate strategies to achieve each priority. The plan contains some measurable success criteria and milestones, particularly in respect of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.

You and the school leaders have analysed the 2013 achievement data thoroughly. You are addressing any small pockets of underachievement by providing additional support for those pupils who need it. Evidence in teachers' planning shows that teachers and teaching assistants are using daily assessment information to identify 'next steps' in learning for pupils. This is helping to ensure that work is matched more closely to pupils' abilities. Evidence seen in pupils' books shows that marking and feedback are improving and there are more opportunities for pupils to respond to marking. Teachers share with pupils what they are to learn in each lesson and pupils understand the steps they need to take to achieve and make progress. However, pupils are less sure of their individual learning targets and what they have to do to achieve them. Leaders are rapidly developing their skills in checking and evaluating the work in their subjects or areas of responsibility. School records show they are involved in the scrutiny of work and joint lesson observations with the headteacher. They are shortly to receive training on how to conduct pupil progress meetings before they begin to take on this responsibility themselves.

Governance is a relative strength and governors use their expertise effectively to support and challenge the school to improve. They have a very clear understanding of school performance data and have begun to challenge any areas where there is underachievement. They make regular visits to the school to see for themselves how well pupils are learning and their insightful reports are shared with the full governing body to ensure that all are informed about the progress being made. A new committee has been established to monitor the progress of pupils, the quality of teaching and the curriculum. The detailed reports from this committee show that governors have a very clear understanding of what the school has already achieved and what it needs to do to improve further.

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, together with the governing body, has established a monitoring group which meets on a regular basis to review the performance of the school. Minutes of meetings show this group is effective in challenging leaders about their work in making the improvements required. The local authority has brokered effective support from a Headteacher Consultant from Bailey Green Primary School to share good practice and provide support for school leaders. The local authority has also provided training and support from school improvement officers and advisers, particularly to help the school make improvements in literacy and numeracy and provide advice in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

Yours sincerely

Christine Inkster  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**