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10 December 2013

James Broadbridge
Headteacher
St Dominic Savio Catholic Primary School, Woodley
Western Avenue
Woodley
Reading
Berkshire
RG5 3BH

Dear Mr Broadbridge

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Dominic Savio Catholic Primary School, Woodley

Following my visit to your school on 10 December 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 September 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:

- strengthen the school development plan by replicating the interim milestones set out for improving teaching for expected pupil outcomes and,
- include evaluations undertaken by the governing body or an independent party
- make use of the Ofsted survey 'School Governance, Learning from the best'.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated together with notes of visits from local authority officers, the headteacher's report to governors and documents relating to the performance management of staff. I visited all classes and spent a brief period in each lesson with you and the deputy headteacher.

Context

Since the last inspection two teachers have left the school. A reading manager has been appointed and the leadership team re-structured. The governing body have re-organised their committee structure

Main findings

The decisive steps taken by the headteacher, reported at the time of the last inspection, have continued. The school has used the inspection findings to pursue developments and raise expectations further. New systems to track the performance of pupils are being used by all staff to identify quickly where pupils are falling behind. Performance management procedures are, for the first time, linking targets for the performance of pupils directly to pay awards. Training for middle leaders on undertaking lesson observations and providing effective feedback has sharpened their understanding of what good teaching looks like. This, in turn is generating a higher level of professional dialogue amongst staff about pupils' learning.

More practical approaches to the teaching of mathematics in Key Stage One and Reception are engaging pupils more in their learning. More consistent approaches to lesson planning for English and mathematics are enabling teachers to structure sequences of lessons more carefully. The insistence by the headteacher on using learning objectives is helping teachers to focus more sharply on pupils learning in lessons.

The school development plan is well constructed and used effectively by senior leaders as a key driver for improvement. It articulates clearly who will do what, by when and how actions will be checked to see if they are working. Planned actions are linked directly to the areas for development highlighted in the recent inspection. Termly milestones for improvements to teaching are mapped out precisely. The plan would benefit from a similar mapping out of expected pupil outcomes. External evaluations are also needed for governors so they are not reliant on information provided only from the school.

The new procedure for the teaching of phonics is proving beneficial particularly for lower ability pupils. The appointment of a reading manager is establishing a systematic approach to the teaching of reading for younger pupils. Effective training and visits to outstanding schools are providing leaders with a clear picture of high quality teaching on which to base their monitoring. Short observations of lessons during my visit confirmed these developments are progressing well.

The governing body responded quickly to the inspection findings. By re-organising their committees, governors are now well positioned to make better use of their individual skills. The new data, analysis and leadership committee is now challenging the headteacher with precise and sharply focused questions on the performance of different groups of pupils. Detailed reports from the headteacher, learning walks in school and half termly data analysis are now well established. Governors have a clear picture of the success of actions taken to improve teaching. Attendance at a recent Ofsted seminar, Getting to Good, has reinforced to governors the importance of a clear and measureable development plan. Governors recognise that the use of external evaluations would enable them to contribute even more strongly to school 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 support from the local authority prior to the last inspection had started to bring about improvements to teaching and pupils' achievement. This involvement in the school is on-going. School Improvement Officers provide well-targeted support with detailed, evaluative reports. Importantly these reports identify clearly where progress lags behind other areas to bespoke further training. The headteacher has received helpful advice on refining the school improvement plan, in light of the inspection findings.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Wokingham and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth.

Yours sincerely

Richard Light
Her Majesty's Inspector