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15 January 2014

Mrs Janet Malone  
Headteacher  
St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Langho  
Whalley Road  
Langho  
Blackburn  
Lancashire  
BB6 8EQ

Dear Mrs Malone

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Langho, Lancashire**

Following my visit to your school on 14 January 2014, 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 November 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:

- Clarify the actions to be taken and increase the regularity of milestones in the action plan so governors can more easily check the plan is working.

**Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, three representatives of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plans were evaluated and other documents linked to school improvement were examined. I visited all classrooms to see the initial impact of actions taken and examined a selection of books and pupils' work.

**Context**

An experienced teacher has recently begun a secondment in your school to fill a vacancy and lead the Early Years and Foundation Stage.

## **Main findings**

You and your governors were 'shocked' by the outcomes of the last inspection. Nonetheless, this did not inhibit you from taking immediate actions to address the key issues for improvement it identified.

Governors met immediately after the inspection and have drawn up a clear and appropriate action plan that identifies the priorities for their development. Although it was not a requirement of the inspection, they decided to commission an external review of governance to help them sharpen their effectiveness. The governing body has established good systems to monitor the implementation of the action plan including a standards and effectiveness committee, regular reported visits to school and frequent informal meetings with pupils. However, their work would be further aided by the inclusion of more regular milestones in the school's action plan that allows them to check it is working. The school's plan contains appropriate priorities for development linked directly to the inspection outcomes.

You too, have taken immediate and appropriate actions which are improving the school. Teaching is improving because you have set clear expectations of teachers regarding their planning. The new lesson plan template in the early years has led to better teaching and the more effective deployment of staff and resources across the unit. Teaching is now more clearly focussed on improving the outcomes for pupils.

Your use of teachers who demonstrate good or outstanding practice in teaching to coach and support others to become consistently good or better is starting to have effect. At this stage, though, it is too soon to see sustained impact on teaching quality.

Senior leaders are now more focussed on checking the impact of actions. The increased frequency and formality in which leaders are holding to account teachers for the progress made by their pupils, coupled with greater rigor in observing teaching, examining teachers' planning and pupils' work, is providing leaders with a much better understanding of how the impact their actions to improve the school are having on the outcome for pupils.

As a result, teachers are challenged to quicken the pace of pupils' achievement. In addition, marking and feedback to pupils has improved since the inspection because you have reviewed the policy and set clear expectations for all staff. However, further work is still needed to improve the quality and consistency of marking, and opportunities for pupils to respond to this feedback, especially in mathematics.

You have established an effective partnership with a local outstanding school to provide training for the teaching of mathematics to more able pupils. Again, though, it is too early yet to see the impact this training has had on pupils' standards.

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 increased the amount of support and challenge it gives to the school through its monitoring and intervention team. This has been welcomed by leaders and governors. Additionally, the local authority has brokered the secondment of an experienced teacher to lead the early years department. The school is using this additional support well and impact is already evident.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire and as below.

Yours sincerely

John Nixon

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority
- Director of Education Roman Catholic Diocese of Salford.