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Mr Jerome McCormack
Headteacher
Christ The King Catholic School, Amesbury
Earls Court Road
Salisbury
SP4 7LX

Dear Mr McCormack

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Christ The King Catholic School, Amesbury

Following my visit to your school on 16 and 17 January 2014, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 2012. 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 section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- make sure that all teachers and leaders focus primarily on learning when planning or monitoring lessons and that teachers are not swayed by advice that is contrary to the guidance in the Ofsted's School Inspection Handbook
- review pupils' progress during the regular review meetings, checking, in particular, that more able pupils are making good progress.

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. We observed several lessons together, to compare our judgements. I also observed some lessons with your deputy headteacher. We reviewed evidence about pupils' progress over the last year and discussed their current attainment.

Main findings

Since the last visit, the headteacher has continued to focus sharply on raising pupils' attainment in his drive to improve the school to good. He has tackled some weaknesses in teaching and, since the section 5 inspection, the quality of teaching has moved on considerably. The school's data show that pupils' progress picked up strongly during last year, particularly in reading.

One of the more recently appointed governors, who has a background in monitoring and advising schools, has been a valuable addition to the governing body. Other governors have been eager to learn from this governor's expertise. As a result, the governing body is now more knowledgeable about the progress pupils make and governors ask more challenging questions to find out how well the school is improving.

Some good and outstanding teaching was seen on this visit. In these lessons, the teachers were very clear about what they expected the pupils to achieve during the lesson. They were alert to how well the pupils were learning and made fine adjustments when necessary. The pupils knew exactly what they had to do and worked hard throughout. The different activities the pupils were given were varied but purposeful. If pupils were asked to work with a partner or in a small group, the teacher did this for a clear purpose: to develop a specific skill, for example, encourage pupils to come up with better ideas for their writing, or to check their mathematical calculations.

Teachers have been given advice on how to improve their teaching, from different sources, including external advisors. Not all advice has been helpful. Some has led them to be too formulaic in their approach to teaching and to teach in a particular way, in their efforts to do their best for the school. Some teachers changed their approach when the inspector and senior leader entered the room. This sometimes lessened the impact of the teaching and caused pupils' learning to slow down. It is important for leaders and teachers to keep a sharp focus on pupils' learning when monitoring the quality of teaching and planning lessons. Teachers should be assured that inspectors do not expect to see a particular approach during an inspection: on the contrary, they look for how well pupils are learning when coming to their judgements, irrespective of the teachers' style or methods.

In the weaker lessons, teachers had not given enough consideration when planning to the range of ability within the class. All pupils were doing the same work and this

was not necessarily at the right level for all leaving some groups with too little challenge.

The headteacher keeps a careful eye on pupils' progress and meets teachers every six weeks to check their attainment. The focus of these meetings is very much on whether pupils are reaching the right levels for their age. There is less focus on whether all pupils, especially those who are more able, are making good enough progress.

The 2013 tests and assessments were much more positive than the results in 2012. Attainment at Year 2 and Year 6 improved to average, for the first time in several years. Pupils' knowledge of phonics showed marked improvement. The pupils who benefit from additional government funding (pupil premium) did much better than in the past. The gap between this particular group's attainment and the other pupils' attainment was narrower in reading, writing and mathematics than is the case nationally.

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 school has drawn on a range of external support. Not all has been helpful in improving the quality of teaching because teachers have received some mixed and confusing messages.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Dickinson
Her Majesty's Inspector