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29 January 2014

Mrs Liz Henry
Headteacher
Saint Benedict's Roman Catholic VA Primary School
Mersey Road
Redcar
North Yorkshire
TS10 1LS

Dear Mrs Henry

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Saint Benedict's Roman Catholic VA Primary School, Redcar and Cleveland

Following my visit to your school on 28 January 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. 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:

- make sure that the improvement plan indicates precisely how leaders intend to measure improvements and the role that governors will play in evaluating progress
- ensure that lesson observations pay greater attention to the progress different groups of pupils are making and following feedback to teachers clear timescales are given to indicate when improvements are expected.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders and teachers. Together we undertook a brief tour of the school and visited some lessons. I met with members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken prior to and since the last inspection. I also evaluated the

school improvement plan and other monitoring evidence including lesson observation documents and performance management targets and minutes from recent governing body meetings.

Context

There have been no staffing changes since the inspection. The school is intending to become an academy in July 2014.

Main findings

Both prior to and following the recent inspection you have taken the leading role in getting staff to recognise that this is not yet a good school. Many staff felt disappointed with the section 5 inspection outcome. In response, your dogged determination and effort have begun to raise staff morale and expectations of what teachers and pupils can achieve. The changes that are necessary for the school to become good are taking shape.

You have started to highlight the importance of the individual responsibility and accountability teachers have for the progress of every child they teach. This is helping to change a culture in which complacency was not tackled consistently. For example, in a recent staff meeting you highlighted the need to improve progression in writing by having writing books from early years through to Year 6 laid out so that staff could see that progression in pupils writing was an issue that needed tackling quickly. This has led to individual reviews with each class teacher on a half termly basis looking at the progress that is or in some cases is not being made by pupils.

You have also led changes to the way in which the quality of teaching is checked. There are now regular and scheduled lesson observations, reviews of teachers' marking and feedback as well as checks on the quality of teachers' planning. To sharpen this further, teachers need to have clearer timescales for when improvements need to be made to their teaching. Observations currently pay insufficient attention to the progress of different groups of pupils within the class. Written feedback to teachers often refers to "the pupils" as a whole and misses the chance to evaluate more precisely the impact of teaching on particular individuals or groups, for example, the most able.

The improvement plan does address each of the priorities raised at the last inspection. There are some examples of clear timescales for when actions need to be completed by. To increase the potential of the plan to support rapid improvement greater clarity is needed around more measurable outcomes related to pupil progress and who is responsible for checking that actions have the intended impact, with more opportunity to include governors in this work.

You are starting to raise expectations of staff including those who have leadership responsibilities. Subject leaders in literacy and mathematics for example, are being

expected to carry out their own monitoring of teaching, marking and data analysis. Staff I spoke to were unanimous in their view that accountability was now everybody's responsibility and they shared your determination to see the school improve and become at least good at the time of the next inspection.

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

Until recently the local authority has not been providing effective support or challenge to the school. A month before the recent inspection the local authority view of the school was that it only required "routine" monitoring when this was far from the case. Previous local authority visits to the school have not been challenging enough and gave the school and staff an over-rosy view of its overall effectiveness. The local authority is now starting to provide more effective support as they now recognise the school requires closer monitoring. This includes a new link local authority officer providing more frequent visits to the school as well as using support from other local headteachers. Support is being provided by two local schools, Newcomen Primary School and St Bede's RC Primary School. This support has been welcomed and valued. The local authority is also due to provide training and support to help other leaders carry out their own lesson observations. It has also signposted early year's teachers to where good practice exists in other schools.

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

Yours sincerely

Philip Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk] – for academies