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7 March 2014

Mr David Savage
Headteacher
St Patrick's RC Primary School
Livesey Street
Collyhurst
Manchester
M4 5HF

Dear Mr Savage

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Patrick's RC Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 6 March 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 December 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:

- sharpen the action plan for the school and the plans for English and mathematics, by specifying the areas of weakness in pupils' achievement and expected outcomes, identifying who is accountable for implementing action, and who is to evaluate how well the outcomes for pupils are met
- carry out a review of governors' responsibilities and agree the evidence needed to ensure robust evaluation of the school's progress
- ensure that all staff heighten their awareness of effective learning through visits to other schools and/or consultation, such as drawing on examples given on the Ofsted good practice website.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the leaders of English and mathematics, an assistant headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body. I held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. You and I made a tour of the school and discussed the action taken since the last inspection drawing on data and monitoring records. The school action plan and the plans for English and mathematics were evaluated.

Context

Three members of staff have left since the inspection in December 2013. You and the governors felt unable to appoint a deputy headteacher of the calibre sought and have temporarily restructured management to give a team of three assistant headteachers. The special educational needs coordinator is new to the school as is the support assistant who is leading sports activities. You have also arranged for a part-time teacher to work with more able pupils in Years 5 and 6. The number of pupils on roll has stayed much the same although several pupils have left and others have joined. You have recently refurbished rooms on the second floor, previously not available for use by the school, to include a classroom for Year 6 pupils and a small sports hall.

Main findings

You, the governing body and staff see the judgement of requires improvement as having 'focussed minds'. You indicate that previous inertia has gone and staff are working together to raise pupils' achievement. The staff have contributed to the action plan which has been viewed by the curriculum committee of the governing body and will be discussed by all governors next week. The plan covers all aspects for improvement identified in the inspection in December 2013. However, the actions and milestones are not balanced by clarity in who will be held accountable for leading action, the expected outcomes for pupils from the action taken, and the details of when and who will carry out an evaluation of how well the intended outcomes have been met. Similarly, the plans for English and mathematics lack specificity regarding the areas of weakness in pupils' attainment and learning, how these will be rectified and the intended impact on pupils' achievement. As a result, it is difficult to gauge how robust evaluation will be. That said, leaders know where the general issues lie, the plans are guiding action and all staff accept the higher expectations of pupils' progress.

You have drawn on available funds and contacts to strengthen staffing and increase the space and resources available. Different ways of working have been introduced, including setting pupils by ability for English and mathematics at Key Stage 1, and the use of frames to help pupils to structure their ideas before writing. Anecdotal evidence indicates these are having a positive impact. You have also set aside time each week for all teachers to meet and discuss aspects of their practice as well as

having staff meetings with a particular focus. An assistant headteacher is supporting the newly qualified teacher and three teachers are participating in the outstanding teacher programme; they are sharing ideas with the rest of the staff and talked positively about the value of reflecting on their teaching.

The findings from the monitoring of pupils books in late January showed inconsistencies in practice. You have emphasised the need for 'excellent presentation' in pupils' books, greater work rate and for all books to be marked. These aspects are rightly reflected in the action plan. When we toured the school, pupils were taking care with their work – Year 6 pupils were checking their spellings and responding to 'next steps' identified in the marking of their previous work. Pupils of all ages showed interest in learning and a willingness to apply themselves. The potential for higher all-round achievement is showing in the success of the newly formed sports teams.

Members of the governing body bring a range of expertise, including educational management. Given a recent change in governors, the time is right to conduct a review of the responsibilities and expectations of a governing body, particularly to identify the evidence needed to hold the school robustly to account.

The school has got off to a good start in looking at ways to improve the quality of teaching and overall provision. All staff would benefit from seeing practice in other schools to deepen their understanding of effective learning.

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 is working with you to identify lines of support through links with other schools and regular monitoring activities. The report from a quality assurance visit last week by a local authority representative summarises the action taken to date and identifies three key priorities linked to improve the quality of teaching which reflect points we discussed.

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

Yours sincerely

Sonja Øyen
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