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Mr Alan Saunders
Headteacher
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Walton Avenue
Penketh
Warrington
Cheshire
WA5 2AU

Dear Mr Saunders

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Warrington

Following my visit to your school on 17 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 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:

- identify precise attainment targets for 2014 and 2015
- ensure that the governing body is complete and that all governors are trained to analyse data and other information, so that they can hold the school to account

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and four governors, a representative of the local authority, a group of pupils and members of the teaching and support staff to discuss the actions taken

since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. I also observed pupils at the beginning of the day and during lunch time.

Context

Since the inspection a new temporary member of staff has been appointed to cover long term absence. Some teachers have also swapped classes to make better use of their skills and interests.

Main findings

You, your staff and governors accept that the school requires improvement and are working together well to bring about the necessary changes. Your action plan includes appropriate targets, responsibilities and timescales, as well as clear criteria for judging how much improvement has been made. However, attainment is not explicitly related to attainment nationally.

You have rightly put considerable emphasis on improving writing. Your figures show that, in most classes, this is improving but there is still a long way to go before it matches standards in writing across the country. Results in mathematics are better than in reading. In both subjects, the amount of progress made varies between year groups.

Following the recent review, the governing body has been restructured and three new members have been appointed. However, it is still short of one foundation governor. The governors' action plan is clear, although some of the timescales are not sufficiently precise. Around a third of governors have received training on how to analyse data and further training is planned for the rest. The governors to whom I spoke were clear about the strengths and areas for development of the school.

The pupils to whom I spoke were enthusiastic about the improvements that have been made since the inspection. They welcomed the increased focus on reading and writing, the greater challenge and variety of work in lessons and the improvements in marking. They said that they now knew the level at which they were working and what their targets were. Less time was being wasted in class than in the past and work for the most able was more demanding. However, they questioned whether enough was being expected of all pupils in mathematics and in spelling.

During my visit, I brought to your attention the fact that some parents ignored the parking signs outside the school and advised you to work with parents, the police, the community and the local authority to tackle this problem. I also highlighted another health and safety issue which you dealt with before I left the school.

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 appropriate support from the local authority, the Archdiocese and other agencies and is making good use of this in implementing its actions for improvement, particularly in relation to writing.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Warrington and the Director of Education for the Archdiocese of Liverpool.

Yours sincerely

Aelwyn Pugh

Her Majesty's Inspector