

CfBT Inspection Services  
Suite 22  
West Lancs Investment Centre  
Maple View  
Skelmersdale  
WN8 9TG

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 618 8524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 01695 566932  
**Direct F** 01695 729320  
**Direct email:** hcarnall@cfbt.com



26 March 2014

Ms Humma Ahmed  
Headteacher  
Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School Blackburn  
Lynwood Road  
Blackburn  
Lancashire  
BB2 6HQ

Dear Ms Ahmed

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School Blackburn, Blackburn with Darwen**

Following my visit to your school on 25 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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:

- in partnership with the diocese and local authority, to conclude to work of confirming the longer-term future of the school
- to fully and effectively involve the governing body in the life of the school
- to ensure that the quality of teachers' marking and feedback to pupils is consistently good or better.

### **Evidence**

Meetings were held with you, subject leaders for numeracy and literacy, pupils, the Chair of Governors, a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese. Documents, including the school's improvement plan, were evaluated. Samples of pupils' work from Years 2, 5 and 6 were reviewed. Classrooms were visited, accompanied by the headteacher.

## **Context**

A new governing body has been appointed to replace the interim executive board. A teacher has joined the school. The headteacher is taking up a post at another school from Easter 2014. The deputy headteacher will work as acting headteacher in partnership with an experienced associate headteacher for the summer term. The associate headteacher has worked with the school in the past.

## **Main findings**

Senior leaders responded quickly to the findings of the inspection. The school's plans already included actions to bring about the necessary improvements. These have been refined and the pace of change has increased. When unavoidable staff change happens, effective steps are taken to ensure that pupils' progress is not interrupted. Plans for the interim leadership of the school after Easter are secure.

The appointment of the Governing Body is an important step in reducing any uncertainty within the community about the school's future. Links with the community have been strengthened by the appointment of governors from the community and by the new approach to homework. In this approach pupils are asked to talk about their ideas at home in preparation for written work in school.

Teaching has improved. Senior leaders' monitoring of teachers' work is detailed. If teaching is not found to be good, coaching is put in place to bring about improvement. Training is in place to ensure that all teachers develop their practice. The coaching and training are helping teachers to review their own approaches and become more effective. School data indicates that pupils in all years are making faster progress, especially in writing and reading.

Senior leaders have prioritised improvement in pupils' writing. New displays in classrooms include examples of pupils' written work and information to support their learning. Pupils believe the displays help them to learn more quickly. All pupils are now expected to write at length at least once each week. These approaches are common throughout the school.

Progress in mathematics has improved. Year 6 pupils are expected to respond to challenging problems which make them think about what they are doing rather than completing routine tasks. Year 2 pupils built mathematics into their more general work by planning the best ways to spend money raised on 'World Book Day' on extra books for their classroom.

Marking remains inconsistent. While the marking policy has been shared with pupils, not all teachers follow it in full. Teachers' comments on pupils' work in all subjects do not always take opportunities to develop pupils' literacy. Teachers are starting to make sure pupils have time to improve their work after it has been marked, but this strategy is not fully developed.

The new governing body has very recently started its work. Prior to this, the Interim Executive Board (IEB) provided strong support and challenge to the headteacher. The IEB also ensured that possible changes to the longer term situation of the school were properly considered. Governors' skills are well-matched to the needs of the school. Continuity has been provided by the confirmation of the Chair of the IEB as Chair of Governors and by the appointment of parent governors who also sat on the IEB. Governors are working to fully assure the school's future. Governors read to pupils on 'World Book Day'. This was a good initial contribution to getting involved in the life of the school, although greater involvement remains a priority.

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 and diocese are working in close partnership to ensure that the future of the school is secure. Much has already been done and the final stages are being reached. The local authority, diocese and governors share a common view of the best way forward. This was not the case in the past, which slowed development and led to turbulence in staffing.

The local authority brokered links with a National Leader of Education who is the headteacher of Broughton-in-Amounderness Church of England Primary School. She is providing effective support to leaders at Sacred Heart. Leaders from Sacred Heart have adapted effective approaches from Broughton to ensure they will work well at Sacred Heart. For example, in setting targets for pupils. Pupils say the new approach is more helpful. Sacred Heart also has productive links with other local schools.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Blackburn with Darwen and the Director of Education for the Salford Diocese.

Yours sincerely

David Selby  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**