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28 March 2014

Mr Peter Burdekin
Headteacher
St Wilfrid's Catholic Primary School
Church Lane
Ripon
North Yorkshire
HG4 2ES

Dear Mr Burdekin

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Wilfrid's Catholic Primary School, North Yorkshire

Following my visit to your school on 27 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 January 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act, 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and the Diocese of Leeds are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- develop teaching quality and leadership capacity further in order to increase the rate of progress all pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher; five members of the governing body; and a representative of the Diocese of Leeds to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement action plan was evaluated. The inspector toured the school with the deputy headteacher, briefly visiting a number of lessons and looking at examples of pupils' written work. The headteacher and the inspector together visited the Early Years section of the school. They observed two phonics lessons.

The inspector scrutinised a number of documents, including the school's data about pupils' targets and their current progress. The inspector had lunch with some pupils in the dining hall.

Main findings

The school's leaders have a growing understanding of what is required to ensure that the school is good at its next inspection. They understand that they need to have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve and have recently set more challenging targets for children's progress.

Teaching is being strengthened. This was evident on the brief visits to lessons to see the teaching of phonics which was supporting children well in developing their understanding of letters and sounds. The school has recently introduced grouping by ability and stage of phonics development and this is beginning to quicken the pace at which pupils are learning to read.

The range of opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills is widening to include more problem-solving. To strengthen teaching further in this subject, visits to other schools to see good practice are scheduled for the summer term. The school has increased its focus on developing pupils' writing skills. Pupils' books showed an increasing range of writing for different purposes and at length. Teachers are starting to follow the school's policy for marking more consistently. As a result, children are getting better advice about how to improve their work. The school's leaders are starting to track and analyse pupils' progress in these key basic skills more closely than they did before the section 5 inspection. There are some positive signs from the school's current data that pupils' rates of progress are getting faster.

The large class of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils is a potential challenge to improving achievement further. The school needs to give careful thought to how best to deal with this large mixed-age, mixed-ability class. The deputy headteacher has to combine teaching this class with her important role in helping to improve the school.

With the help of the Diocesan Advisor, governors have reorganised how the governing body operates. Members of the governing body realise that they need to be more 'hands on' in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. A date has been set for the diocese to formally review governance, with a view to strengthening how governors do this. Training for governors needs to move swiftly up the agenda so that governors can increase the challenge they give to the school's leaders, for example around what school performance data is telling them.

The school's plans for improvement are suitable. A more formal evaluation of the impact of actions identified within the plan would benefit governors and school leaders in carrying out their roles in relation to school improvement. For example, the headteacher has conducted a work scrutiny and a 'learning walk' round school recently but conclusions needed to inform the next steps have not been drawn.

An effective and well intentioned start has been made in response to the findings of the section 5 inspection with some actions beginning to show impact.

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 Diocese of Leeds stepped in promptly to help secure two partner schools whose leaders are now advising the school's leaders in their drive for improvement. The school's leaders have acted on the advice received and some early impact can be seen. For example, the ways in which the school collects and analyses data about pupils' progress have been improved. Leaders can now see more clearly which children are making expected progress or more than expected progress. The school is identifying more quickly where they need to intervene to help individual children make faster progress. The partner school leaders have helped to adjust the action plan so that the targets for improvement are more specific. The governing body now needs to use these targets to measure the effectiveness of the school's actions. Following advice from the partner schools, the headteacher is involving other senior leaders more closely in school improvement work.

The impact of the local authority support has been more limited. Since the inspection the local authority has become more closely involved with the school and the school is drawing well on the advice received.

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

Yours sincerely

Honoree Gordon

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority
- Diocese of Leeds
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors