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28 April 2014

Mr Tobias Melia
Headteacher
Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic Primary School
Hare Lane
Crawley
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Dear Mr Melia

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Our Lady Queen of Heaven Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 25 April 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 your staff 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 and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- revise considerably the action plan, so that there is a much greater, better targeted and explicit focus on what it is expected to achieve for the pupils
- ensure, as a matter of real urgency, that teachers provide challenging tasks in lessons for all pupils, including higher attainers, and that, consequently teaching improves more rapidly
- rearrange the leadership of mathematics, so that teaching and learning in this subject improves considerably and quickly

- consider carefully decisions taken about the balance of the curriculum, so that pupils enjoy a broad range of subjects and experiences.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with your deputy headteacher and other school leaders, along with representatives of the Governing Body and the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. We spoke on a video conference. I toured the school, making short visits to lessons. I looked at school documents, including the school improvement plan, Governing Body minutes and data about pupils' academic progress.

Context

You were not present on the day of my visit as you had been granted leave by the governing body. However, we did speak beforehand, and through the internet on the day of my visit. We have arranged a further telephone discussion soon. I expect to visit the school again in September and look forward to meeting you face-to-face then.

Main findings

Since the inspection, there has been a great deal of hard work to try to improve the school. Some of this is very profitable. For example, a review of the Governing Body by the local authority provides a valuable set of recommendations to improve governors' work. Governors have usefully begun to work on these. The new school action plan has some beneficial and well-considered elements. You have made useful revisions to the middle leadership structure of the school. As headteacher, it is clear that you have won the respect of staff, parents and governors, galvanising commitment to improvement. The school has some lovely facilities, such as its extensive and welcoming library. It has an informative and attractive website.

However, the evidence from my visit suggests that the school needs to make some urgent revisions to its current pattern of work in order to give itself the best possible chance of being a good school by the next inspection.

The action plan contains some useful ideas, such as arranging staff training and visits to other schools to see strong practice. However, this plan does not identify what the outcomes of these activities should be, in terms of pupil progress or improvements in teaching. Thus, when I was talking to senior leaders and governors, there was too little sharpness and precision in what they could say about how successfully the school is improving. Too often these discussions were about actions taken rather than any impact of these actions. The school's evaluations of teaching are insufficiently precise about how lessons and teaching over time can

become better. In its efforts to improve standards in English and mathematics, the school is in danger of committing too much time to these subjects to the detriment of others and possibly to the interest levels of pupils. It is important that the quality of teaching in English and mathematics should improve, more than the quantity.

On my visits to classes today, which included looking at teachers' planning and pupils' work over time, I noted clearly and shared with senior staff that:

- pupils behaved well in all the lessons and are ready to learn; relationships appeared positive and respectful
- across the school, the pupils' writing I saw was notably better than the work I saw in mathematics
- pupils often wrote well and in an interesting way, frequently in short tasks
- in mathematics, conversely, the work set for pupils was narrow and over-guided the pupils so that they do not have to think sufficiently for themselves
- the work teachers set for pupils was not well enough matched to the assessed needs of pupils - planned differentiation of work was too vague; there has been insufficient progress on improving this since the inspection
- many lessons focus on delivering a general learning objective more than meeting the actual learning needs of the pupils; while there is some merit in the way the school uses whole class learning objectives, it is important that, as time moves on, these become used more flexibly, in accordance with pupils' needs
- higher attaining pupils, in particular, did not receive challenging enough work.

Given the considerable deficiencies identified in the teaching of mathematics at the January inspection, the school has been too slow to make change and ensure that this subject is well led and managed. I saw very little evidence of pupils having better opportunities to solve problems and choose the calculation methods, as the inspection recommended. In Year 1 and 2 lessons, pupils were spoon-fed when finding quarters, as staff provided worksheets with four circles on, in which to divide cubes. These lessons could have been much more challenging. Older pupils do many sums (which is no bad thing in itself) but without evidence in their books that they know how to use or apply the methods used or that they fully understand their purposes. Teaching in mathematics clearly continues to require considerable improvement.

The school makes suitable assessments of the progress of pupils. These assessments show some improvement over time but still far too few pupils are

expected to reach higher levels of attainment. This is because these pupils do not receive challenging enough work.

The governing body is committed to the school and to improving its work. Members are beginning to ask more robust and challenging questions of senior leaders. They recognise, however, that they have some way to go to be fully effective. They need to learn more about what a good answer from school leaders might contain and what data and information they should routinely receive from senior leaders. Consequently, they are actively seeking training opportunities.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. I will keep in close touch with the school.

External support

You have, quite properly, asked the local authority for high levels of support, which it is providing. The local authority's key adviser has agreed with me to work closely with you on addressing the recommendations in this letter.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for West Sussex and the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector