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Mrs Delany-White
Headteacher
St Edmund's Catholic Primary School
Radley Road
Abingdon
OX14 3PP

Dear Mrs Delany-White

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Edmund's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 16 May, 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 February 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. The school should take immediate action to:

- make sure that governors are clear about how they can best support the school in eradicating teaching that is consistently less than good
- ensure that all teachers routinely use pupil progress information to better match tasks and activities to pupils' needs.

During the visit, I held meetings with you and your leaders, three governors, a representative from the local authority and the headteacher of Thomas Reade Primary school to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. You and your leaders accompanied me on visits to observe teaching in Reception, Year 5 and Year 3. I evaluated your action plan.

Context

You took up your post at the start of the summer term. The Year 3 and Year 2 class teachers both left the school at the end of last term. The headteacher of Thomas Reade Primary School has provided extensive support.

Main findings

Prior to your appointment, the school made little progress in tackling the areas for improvement from the last inspection in February 2014. You have been in post for three weeks and during this time your initial actions have been correctly focused. You are resolute in your determination to move the school to good. Your expectations are high. Your judgements are accurate and you have a realistic picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You fully understand that improvement is urgent given the poor headway made by the school since the previous inspection.

The external support you have received has enabled you to finalise the action plan. The plan provides your leaders and governors with a clear set of priorities. It appropriately emphasises the importance of the checks made by the school's leaders and governors. It usefully shows where you have made changes in response to this monitoring. You have helpfully complemented this plan with a long term overview of staff training and development. This overview plans out in detail how you will meet the significant training needs that some of your staff have. It would be even more helpful for your leaders and governors if this overview was more obviously linked to the priorities in the action plan.

You have sensibly focused your work on ensuring that the improved system to track pupil progress is fully operational. However you are not yet making enough use of the wealth of information you have gathered. You have robust plans in place to rectify this. You recognise how crucial it is that class teachers are given effective training in how to use information on pupil progress. In the classes I visited with you and your leaders, tasks were still not well enough matched to pupils' needs. In the lessons we visited insufficient attention had been paid to finding out what pupils had already learnt. As a result valuable time was lost covering old ground and some pupils, mostly but not solely boys, became disengaged. This was an area for improvement from the last report and it has not yet been sufficiently tackled.

The school's governors have established a new committee which will report back to the full governing body on the quality of teaching and its impact on raising standards. In order to do this effectively, committee members have wisely observed the school in action. Governors on this committee have completed training so their understanding of the school's information on pupils' achievement is sharper. The committee is playing a vital role in marshalling and scrutinising the evidence which the governing body needs to hold the school to account. Stronger and more formal links need to be made between the findings of this committee and the targets teachers are set to manage their performance.

The local authority has substantially supported middle leaders in writing plans for improvements in literacy and numeracy. However the middle leaders are unclear about their role in driving the improvements forward. They require more training in how to monitor and evaluate actions taken. For example a policy to improve marking has not made a big enough difference because leaders have not thoroughly checked whether all teachers are adhering to it.

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 return to the school to carry out a further monitoring visit in the near future as I am concerned about the insufficiency of the actions taken so far by the school, and I was unable to meet with the Chair or Vice Chair of the Governing Body.

External support

The school has benefited from extensive support provided by both the local authority's school intervention leader and the headteacher of Thomas Reade Primary School. The headteacher of Thomas Reade Primary School has a crystal clear understanding of what he can do to best assist the school. His efforts to date have rightly focused on improving the system used to track the progress pupils are making. Both he and the school intervention leader understand that now this system is in place, they need to train the school's leaders in getting the most out of it. The local authority is aware that the new headteacher and governing body need support with recruitment and staffing issues, and has agreed to provide it.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Oxfordshire and the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard
Her Majesty's Inspector