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10 June 2014

Mrs Sandra Hamilton

Headteacher

Our Lady and St Swithin's Catholic Primary School

Parkstile Lane

Liverpool

Merseyside

L11 0BQ

Dear Mrs Hamilton

Special measures monitoring inspection of Our Lady and St Swithin's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9 June 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, representatives of the local authority and the executive headteacher. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated. I also took a tour of the school, visited lessons, scrutinised a sample of pupils' work and examined information on the progress of pupils currently on roll at the school.

Context

Since the previous inspection, an executive headteacher has been appointed. He is a National Leader of Education and is headteacher of a local secondary school. A

member of the teaching staff has left the school. In addition, there have been some additional appointments made to the governing body and a learning mentor has been appointed to work with parents and pupils, particularly on attendance.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

There has been no 'treading water' since the previous inspection. School leaders, inspired by the purposeful and insightful executive headteacher, have set about to conquer quickly the remaining obstacles standing in the way of school improvement. The regime of unaccountability that has been allowed to persist for far too long has been confronted with energy, determination and courage. The school's improvement plan represents a suitable 'road map' to chart the course speedily out of special measures. The plan is appropriately challenging and demonstrates a sense of urgency and hunger for improvement. This school is now far better placed to go forward.

The experience of the executive headteacher has been invaluable, particularly in weeding-out inadequate teaching. The local authority has supported the school well by providing expert advice in dealing with personnel issues. The governing body has made it clear to all staff, in no uncertain terms, that weak teaching will not be tolerated.

This multi-faceted approach has been highly productive; high expectations have been communicated effectively and teachers have responded positively. School leaders have completely revised procedures for the management of teachers' performance and teachers are now rigorously held to account for the progress of pupils in their classes.

The reconstituted governing body has benefited from the involvement of committed parents who want the very best for the pupils of Our Lady and Saint Swithin's. They are full of enthusiasm and have proposed practical plans to involve parents more in the life of the school, for example by running information evenings on how to help children understand long division in mathematics.

The recent engagement of the local parish priest has also helped to heal the rifts that had developed with the community. Pupils have begun again to take part in (and win!) local sports competitions: pupils proudly showed me the football shirt recently donated by Wayne Rooney, a former pupil of the school – this is now becoming a school that believes in itself, determined to improve the life chances of its pupils.

Actions taken by school leaders have started to make a dent in a long legacy of underachievement that has blighted the school. Information on the progress of pupils currently on roll shows a marked improvement on this time last year in both

Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. However, there is still some way to go. There remains too much inconsistency of practice in teaching. Teachers do not always adjust their lessons to the needs and abilities of pupils. Marking does not always pick up on the mistakes that pupils make in their work and pupils do not get sufficient opportunity to respond to teachers' comments on how to improve.

School leaders have successfully improved attendance which is now above average. Competitions with cash prizes have encouraged pupils to attend regularly. This is demonstrable impact of the work of the learning mentor. She works highly effectively with both pupils and parents to encourage positive relationships with the school. The pupils are polite, smart and work hard in their lessons; they respond well to the new displays around the school that convey the school's motto, 'Love, live and learn'.

The local authority and the archdiocese have adopted an incisive approach to the findings of the previous inspection. Both parties agree that the outdoor space in the Early Years Foundation Stage requires considerable investment to make this area conducive to creative and meaningful play. Both the local authority and the archdiocese have worked solidly with the school through its turbulent years, but the support that they have brokered with De La Salle Academy and Our Lady's Bishop Eton Catholic Primary School has been inspirational, stimulating a fundamental change in the way this school has traditionally operated. These partnerships have had a profound impact on moving this school forward for the long-term benefit of the pupils and all members of the community of Our Lady and Saint Swithin's.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection in the year groups that at present do not have a permanent member of staff.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Diocese and the Director of Children's Services for Liverpool. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Joan Bonenfant
Her Majesty's Inspector