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Mrs Sue McMahon
Acting Headteacher
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Bristol Road
Portishead
BS20 6QB

Dear Mrs McMahon

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

Following my visit to your school on Thursday 26 June 2014 with Alan Hinchliffe HMI, 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 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 March 2014. 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.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the subject leader for mathematics, four governors including the Chair and Vice Chair, a group of Year 6 pupils and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan and other documents were scrutinised and evaluated. You also gave us a guided tour of the school, during which we visited each classroom.

Context

Since the school was inspected in March 2014, a part-time external consultant has been appointed to work with the school on a temporary basis to support the school's leadership. The school has created two additional internal working areas to support

group work and provide teachers with a work base. The subject leaders for English and mathematics are being provided with weekly non-contact time in recognition of their management responsibilities.

Main findings

- Since the inspection, the senior leaders have focused their attention on tackling the issues raised. They have acted quickly to implement appropriate improvement strategies and begin the process of ensuring that the school is judged to be at least 'good' when it is re-inspected.
- Senior leaders are taking advantage of Ofsted's presentations to develop an awareness and understanding of successful strategies to bring about school improvement. They have also been proactive at organising visits to learn from other schools that have been recognised as working successfully.
- The external consultant is working with the school's senior leaders to implement improvement strategies, to manage change and to develop skills. His contribution is valued by those at the school.
- Working together, the school's leaders and the governing body have developed a detailed improvement plan covering the summer term. It sets out the actions to be taken to remedy the issues raised during the recent inspection. As the school builds its capacity for improvement, steps are being put in place to review the progress being achieved and amend the plan ready for the start of the new academic year.
- There has been an appropriate focus on strengthening the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics. The subject leader is working with staff to ensure greater consistency of practice across each year group and to increase the level of challenge that pupils experience.
- The school has introduced a draft calculation policy as a strategy to ensure pupils are supported to learn and build on prior learning. The mathematics subject leader is working with senior leaders to review the impact of the policy so that staff are well prepared for its formal introduction in September 2014.
- The school's monitoring reports about the quality of mathematics teaching shows that pupils are being supported appropriately. As yet, the quality of mathematics teaching is not of a consistently high standard. The variable quality of work in pupils' books confirms that teachers are not being sufficiently demanding about presentation.
- Similarly, while the working walls, where pupils are able to present their solutions to mathematical investigations, are motivational the presentation on show is not yet of a high enough standard.
- The school has reviewed and increased the amount of monitoring being carried out to gauge pupils' performance and progress. The information being gathered is starting to be used more consistently to support teachers assess how well individual pupils are learning.

- The school has introduced an internet based software programme for all the Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils to use. The intention is that pupils can develop and practice their mathematical skills. As yet, the programme is not being used regularly by all pupils and some report difficulties with access.
- The senior leaders have focused attention on improving the quality of teachers' marking. In some classes marking is detailed and sets out clearly what the pupil needs to do to improve. In other books, the marking is not up-to-date.
- Staff morale at the school remains strong. There is a determination to improve the school so that it is judged at least 'good' when it is re-inspected.
- Pupils are positive about the school and are proud to attend. They enjoy developing their mathematical skills and speak about the pleasure they get when given the opportunity to engage in investigating and solving problems.
- Following the Ofsted inspection, the governing body has engaged with parents to keep them informed of developments. They have met with parents to explain how the school is planning to bring about the improvements that need to be made. The governors have also taken action to review the quality of their work. They have commissioned the local authority to conduct a 'health check', which highlighted the governing body's strengths and areas for development. Governors are taking the outcomes of the review seriously and planning to produce a plan to strengthen the quality of their work.
- The governing body is working closely with the school's senior leaders to monitor the impact of the school's intervention strategies. To do so, one of the governing body's committees meets regularly to scrutinise the areas identified for improvement. As part of their monitoring responsibilities, the acting headteacher reports regularly about progress being made implementing the improvement plan.
- The local authority is providing a good level of support to the school. Since the inspection, they have increased their level of engagement, which has strengthened the school's leadership and supported the development of the improvement plan. The authority is monitoring the progress being made very thoroughly.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for North Somerset and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Clifton.

Yours sincerely

Ken Buxton

Her Majesty's Inspector