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25 June 2014

Mr Peter Thompson  
Headteacher  
St Stephen's Catholic Primary School, Skipton  
Gargrave Road  
Skipton  
North Yorkshire  
BD23 1PJ

Dear Mr Thompson

**Special measures monitoring inspection of St Stephen's Catholic Primary School, Skipton**

Following my visit to your school on 24 June 2014, with Allison Chin, Associate Inspector, 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 February 2014.

**Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leadership team, and pupils. Inspectors also met with the Chair of the Governing Body, governors, and representatives of the local authority and the Leeds Catholic Diocese. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plans were evaluated. A series of short visits were made to the Early Years Foundation Stage, Year 1 and Year 2 classes to observe the teaching phonics and a sample of leaders monitoring records were reviewed.

## **Context**

There have been no changes to staffing since the section 5 inspection which placed the school into special measures.

## **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The local authority plan and the support school leaders are receiving has helped to guide the headteacher and senior staff in taking the first steps to tackle the areas for improvement following the section 5 inspection. Leaders have begun to re-establish regular checks on the school's work. Milestones in the school plan are helping leaders to check that actions are taking place to the anticipated timescale. However, these checks are not sufficiently focused on the difference that actions are making to pupils' learning. Local authority advice and support is compensating for this current lack of capacity in the school and, as a consequence, some leaders are becoming more informed about where to focus their efforts to improve literacy and numeracy.

Some training has taken place to develop teachers' knowledge of how to teach phonics. Pupils are beginning to use the strategies they are being taught to read independently. Extensive programmes of additional support are presently being rolled out to help pupils who have begun to fall behind to catch-up in literacy and numeracy skills. While this is a useful short-term measure, it is no substitute for good teaching. Teaching in Year 1 and 2 classes is not yet being adapted sufficiently to ensure that pupils make swifter progress. For example, children are undertaking very similar work and activities in Reception and Key Stage 1 classes. Some pupils, in upper Key Stage 2, are starting to receive more guidance and direction from their teachers to recognise the features of good writing and the standard expected of them. This practice is not yet consistent across all year groups in the school.

Pupils' attendance is starting to improve and the school's expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes are beginning to be shared and understood by pupils. For example, pupils know what behaviour the school expects of them in different situations such as in classrooms, playing safely at break and lunchtime and being kind to each other. These messages are explained by the headteacher during assembly and are reinforced in rules displayed in classrooms.

Governors are aware of some shortcomings in their oversight of the school's work. They are meeting more frequently and have begun to implement recommendations following the recent review of governance. The newly formed Governors' Ofsted Action Group is helping them to keep a closer check on the school's work. The diocese and local authority are working effectively together to strengthen governance further. Plans are well advanced for additional, experienced governors, to join the governing body.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

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

The school's action plan is fit for purpose

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Gina White

**Her Majesty's Inspector**