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27 June 2014

Ann Goodison  
Headteacher  
St Patrick's Catholic Primary School  
Marston Road  
Stafford  
ST16 3BT

Dear Mrs Goodison

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Patrick's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 26 June 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 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. The school should take further action to:

- check frequently what difference the additional support given to pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is making to their achievement, in order to monitor the impact of spending more closely
- make greater use of the evidence in pupils' books to judge their progress and so build a picture of the quality of teaching
- set more specific actions for teachers following monitoring checks, with short timescales for implementation
- check rigorously that teachers have followed such advice and act immediately where this is found not to have happened.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, four members of the governing body including the chair and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A number of documents was examined, including the outcomes of monitoring activities, minutes of meetings, and the school's latest achievement information. Short visits were made to classrooms to talk to pupils and to look at the work in their books.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, one teacher has joined the school. An assistant headteacher has been appointed and is due to take up her post in September. You have revised roles and responsibilities for senior staff to ensure key functions are covered more securely.

## **Main findings**

You, your deputy headteacher and the governing body have responded decisively to the findings of the recent inspection. You wasted no time in amending your action plan and have ensured all staff and governors are aware of what needs to be done. The action plan shows clearly what actions you will take to address all the areas requiring improvement. It includes helpful measures and reference to a range of means by which you and governors will track progress. The plan does not always show who will carry out each of these monitoring activities, or when they will happen. As a result, lines of accountability are not always clear. On the whole, the timeframes you have set out for actions are sensible. Some are not sharp enough for you to check frequently whether improvement is rapid and sustained.

Your records show you have made frequent checks on the quality of teaching by visiting lessons, looking at pupils' books and looking at patterns of achievement for different groups of pupils, particularly for boys and for pupils supported by additional funding. This is beginning to indicate strengths and weaknesses for individual teachers in different aspects of teaching. You give teachers helpful suggestions from your findings. Some teachers say this is helping them to improve. You do not make sufficient use of the whole range of this information to build a complete picture of the quality of teaching. For example, visits to lessons show that all teachers have the necessary skills to teach well. Pupils' literacy and religious education books show that some teachers do not use these skills in every lesson. As a result, pupils in some classes are not taught well enough to ensure they make good progress.

You have revised the policy for rewarding good behaviour and tackling any that is not acceptable. Your records and observations during this inspection confirm this is

having a positive impact. Fewer reminders are needed for pupils to concentrate in lessons. Most work well, without distraction.

The deputy headteacher, in her role as subject leader for English, has successfully raised the profile of writing. Pupils are now more motivated to write and most feel more confident to do so. You and your deputy headteacher have made clear that you expect teachers to insist that pupils present work neatly and use correct spelling and punctuation in their writing. You have also agreed with teachers, through a new policy on marking, how you expect them to give guidance to pupils on how to improve their work. The policy also makes it clear that teachers should ensure pupils routinely act upon this advice. This has led to some improvements in marking. Some teachers now use the agreed approaches effectively to challenge and support pupils to make rapid progress in writing. In these classes, gaps between the standards for different groups of pupils have closed. Some teachers regularly give pupils suggestions for improvement, but do not ensure pupils have acted upon the advice. Therefore pupils do not always make the expected improvement. In some books, the guidance given to pupils is too general, so it does not help the pupil to correct mistakes or improve essential skills. Sometimes teachers' written comments do not require the pupil to make any improvement in the piece of work completed. Your records and pupils' books also show that not all teachers follow the agreed basic procedures for marking work.

External reviews of governance and of how the school is using its pupil premium funding to improve the achievement of eligible pupils were recommended at the previous inspection. This process has begun and is scheduled to be completed by the end of this term. The governing body has used this opportunity to improve its structure to ensure it can carry out its responsibilities more effectively. Governors are now better informed about the use and intended impact of pupil premium funding. Leaders ensure governors receive relevant information on the achievement of eligible pupils, gathered through teachers' assessments. However, leaders do not track the progress pupils make through additional small group work or individual support programmes. A substantial proportion of the additional funding is used for this 'intervention' work, so it is important that governors are enabled to judge whether this is a good use of the money.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. During this visit you agreed that:

- senior leaders will attend an HMI led workshop on improving the impact of subject leaders
- HMI will receive copies of you headteacher's reports to governors
- you will send HMI an analysis of your achievement information at the end of each term.

## **External support**

The governing body have valued the external review of governance and welcome the availability of continued support. Support from a local authority consultant has helped improve pupils' motivation and confidence with writing. The improvement adviser has given helpful advice on refining the school improvement plan. A core group of local authority officers and school leaders, including the Chair of the Governing Body, meets each half term to review progress with the improvement plan. These meetings consider whether improvement is taking place, but do not sufficiently challenge the school as to whether this is happening quickly enough. Support for checking the quality of teaching has been focused too heavily on observing lessons and has not helped the school to use examination of the work in pupils' books to substantiate its judgements.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire local authority and the *Diocese of .....*

Yours sincerely

Sandra Hayes  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**