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27 June 2014

Mr Joe Welsh  
Headteacher  
Holy Family Catholic Primary School  
Upper Essex Street  
Liverpool  
Merseyside  
L8 6QB

Dear Mr Welsh

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Liverpool**

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 Ms Poole, your assistant headteacher, 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:

- ensure that the teaching commitments of the headteacher and the assistant headteacher are not so onerous that they deflect them from their strategic role in driving school improvement
- expand the senior leadership team to increase the time available to ensure that all members of staff are held to account for the quality and effectiveness of their work
- increase the role of the governing body in monitoring the impact of actions taken to improve the school
- ensure that judgements on the quality of teaching do not rely solely on lesson observations but take into account a range of evidence,

including information on pupils' progress and the effectiveness of teachers' marking.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the assistant headteacher, other members of staff, pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. I also took a tour of the school, spoke to pupils about their work and their lessons, looked at a sample of pupils' books and scrutinised information on pupils' current progress.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, the middle leadership team has been restructured to reflect whole school responsibilities. Several new teaching appointments have been made, to take effect from September 2014. A teacher has been appointed in the Early Years Foundation Stage and another to teach Year 5. A teacher has also been appointed to work in the Language Resource Base and two new support assistants have been appointed.

## **Main findings**

School leaders accepted the judgement and findings of the previous inspection – they could see what had let the school down and what they needed to work on. The action plan that has been drawn up is direct, clear and appropriately focused on the areas for improvement identified at the inspection. It is supported further by detailed and precise plans to improve English and mathematics. These plans are already starting to have an impact; information on pupils' current progress shows a marked improvement on this time last year.

The senior leadership team is too small. The headteacher and assistant headteacher are trying to do too much; they both have substantial teaching commitments that are in danger of distracting them from the work in hand. The role of other leaders in contributing to school improvement is not robust enough and responsibilities for checking on the impact of changes are not shared out sufficiently. Nevertheless, senior leaders have been very successful in making sure all members of the school community are united in the drive for improvement. During my visit, I found clear evidence to suggest that this school is moving swiftly in the right direction.

An innovative approach to improving teaching has been embraced by staff and this is already having an impact. Teachers work in teams of three, planning lessons together, teaching and filming the lessons taught; this is then followed up by the team studying the film, analysing what went well and discussing what needed further improvement. Teachers have been able to focus on aspects of teaching, such as whether pupils are engaging in the lesson; the ensuing professional dialogue has

been extremely beneficial. During my visit, I asked pupils how they felt about this approach and whether they had noticed any difference to their lessons. They were unanimous in their praise, as one Year 4 pupil explained to me, 'Teachers are sharing their strategies and learning from each other...lessons have got better'.

Other pupils were also keen to point out that, because lessons are better than they used to be, pupils' behaviour has also improved. They said: 'the ones who used to be naughty are more mature now and take the work seriously...their attendance is better because lessons are more interesting'. These perceptive comments really go to show just what an impact good teaching and effective professional development can have on the day to day experience of pupils in the classroom.

As marking was not always of consistently good quality across all year groups and subjects, a new approach to marking has been trialled with some classes. When I examined the books of pupils in these classes, I could see a noticeable improvement in the effectiveness of teachers' marking. Pupils I spoke to during my visit could explain clearly how marking had changed; they could also show me examples in their books where teachers' marking had helped them to understand a concept, or had stopped them repeating the same mistakes. Pupils have several opportunities to re-draft their work to eliminate errors and misconceptions; far from finding this tedious, they take great pride in the fact that, when their work is accurate it is considered 'fit for publication'. This process really helps pupils to write well and with precision. As a result, the quality of writing has improved immeasurably since the inspection. As this trial has proved so successful, this approach has now been rolled out across all year groups.

The contribution of the governing body to school improvement has been most marked in tackling poor attendance. Tough-talking interviews between the Chair of the Governing Body, a former headteacher, and parents have taken place; expectations have been made clear, in no uncertain terms, that it is a parents' duty to ensure that their child attends regularly and on time. As a result of this determined approach, attendance has improved quickly and is now average. The governors are also considering sharpening the procedures for managing teachers' performance by ensuring all staff provide evidence to the governing body of how they meet the demands of the Teachers' Standards.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The school engages well with a wide variety of partnerships, including with the diocese and the local authority. The Dingle, Granby and Toxteth partnership is a

group of schools, including good and outstanding providers, in similar circumstances to those of Holy Family. This highly effective network has been helpful to the school, for example in improving teaching and devising strategies to ensure pupils who enter the school with English as an additional language make good progress.

The local authority provides strong support and challenge to the school, for example by conducting monthly 'Challenge Board' meetings to check on the progress made against the targets in the action plan. The local authority intends to conduct a full review of the school in the autumn term 2014 to make sure that Holy Family is on course to rapidly becoming a good school.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Liverpool and as below.

Yours sincerely

Joan Bonenfant  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**