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Mrs Hyacinth Appah
Headteacher
English Martyrs Roman Catholic Primary School
Flint Street
London
SE17 1QD

Dear Mrs Appah

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to English Martyrs Roman Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 2 July 2014, 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 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:

- increase the level of challenge for all pupils
- maximise the opportunities provided by working in partnership with a local outstanding school to improve the quality of teaching.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, a group of pupils, four teachers, three members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's plan for improvement. You gave me a short tour of the school during which we observed pupils at work in their classes. We also made short visits to two physical education lessons in the playground.

Context

There have been no staffing changes since the inspection. Five teachers will be leaving at the end of this academic year. Five teachers and one senior leader have been appointed to start work in September 2014.

Main findings

Leaders and governors have acted quickly to address the issues from the recent inspection and are determined in their approach. The school's plan for improvement addresses the key areas for improvement. It includes termly milestones for key performance indicators, such as the proportions of teaching expected to be good or better. This means leaders and governors can check that the school's progress is rapid enough.

Teachers have a clearer understanding of the information available about pupils' progress. Meetings between senior leaders and teachers to discuss pupils' progress are more frequent. They are now sharply focussed on the progress pupils make from their starting points, rather than within the current year. This means that pupils making less progress than expected are identified quickly. These pupils join catch-up groups to fill gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Teachers' marking has improved. Detailed comments and well-chosen questions enable pupils to reflect in detail on their work. Teachers' comments point out more clearly the next steps in pupils' learning. Teachers take opportunities to correct common grammatical errors in pupils' writing as well as commenting on the intended learning for that particular lesson. Work in pupils' books shows that marking is having a positive impact on their progress.

Leaders have raised their expectations of the level of challenge provided in lessons. Teachers are now expected to plan for pupils of different abilities in more detail. Although more-able pupils are being stretched, pupils spoken to would welcome even more challenge. Leaders have provided training for teachers so that they are able to ask more searching questions of pupils. Leaders regularly observe teaching and check pupils' books to make sure that training is having an impact on teachers' practice and on pupils' learning. Weekly planning meetings provide opportunities for leaders to check teachers' plans and to provide support where necessary. Teachers value this support.

Teachers have begun to engage pupils more in their learning. They are taking more opportunities to respond to pupils' interests, resulting in pupils learning at a deeper level. For example, a pupil in Year 6, having studied 'The Titanic', satisfied their curiosity about the ocean by researching aquatic life, resulting in a piece of high quality non-fiction writing. Another pupil explained that her writing had improved

because, having been involved in a role play exercise, she was better able to describe the emotions of the characters in her story.

Leaders have introduced a new system for recording, and checking patterns in pupils' behaviour. Regular checks enable leaders to provide tailored support for individual pupils as well as for teachers who would benefit from additional training. Early indications are that actions to improve pupils' behaviour are effective.

Governors have put a framework in place to ensure that policies and risk assessments are regularly reviewed. A core group of governors meet half termly to review the progress the school is making. Their meetings are synchronised with the availability of pupil's progress information. This means they can better evaluate the impact of the school's work.

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 local authority has maintained an overview of the school's progress since the inspection. It has provided funding for an external behaviour consultant to work with teachers to improve their behaviour management skills. A local authority officer has worked closely with the Chair of the Governing Body to support the appointment of senior leaders. The local authority is currently arranging a partnership with a local outstanding school.

An external behaviour consultant has provided training for teachers in managing pupils' behaviour. He has given individual support as required and has checked on the impact of the work. As a result, teachers' confidence is rising and incidents of poor behaviour are handled more effectively.

Literacy and mathematics consultants provide effective training for teachers and teaching assistants in raising the quality of teaching. They have also supported leaders in checking that judgements about pupils' achievement are accurate.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Southwark and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Loukes
Seconded Inspector