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Nyree Martin
Acting Headteacher
St Edmund's Catholic Primary School
St Mary's Street
Bungay
NR35 1AY

Dear Mrs Martin

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

Following my visit to your school on 10 July 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 May 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 inspection, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher, ten members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. We looked at the school's achievement data and written observations of teaching. Teaching was observed in three of the four classes.

Context

Since the school was inspected, the school improvement board, comprising members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority has met twice. The board is intended to provide additional challenge and support to the school and governing body.

Main findings

The senior leadership team and governing body have acted swiftly to begin to address the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. The appointment of an acting headteacher just before the inspection significantly strengthened leadership and management. The reinvigorated senior leadership team is having a galvanising effect on school improvement. The school has made a good start on its journey towards becoming at least good.

The senior leadership team has moved quickly and decisively to improve the quality of teaching. The school has produced a thorough and detailed improvement plan. This plan is well focused on the areas for improvement identified in the most recent inspection report. It dovetails these effectively to the school's own priorities, such as for the appointment of key staff. Where possible measurable targets are in place so that governors can hold the school to account for how well it is doing. Where these are not yet in place there is a clear rationale for adding them at a later date. The plan is clear about who is responsible for doing what. It is less clear about whether dates are for starting or completing an action.

The quality of teaching is improving. This is in part because existing good practice in the school is being shared more effectively. It is also a result of better sharing of good practice with its partner Catholic school in Beccles. This is a two way process, with acknowledged strengths in each school being shared with the other. For example, best practice in respect of the Early Years Foundation Stage has been shared and plans are in place to share expertise in mathematics. Provision for more able pupils was identified as an area for improvement and this has been a focus for observations of teaching, scrutiny of teachers' planning and additional professional development for staff.

The school has recently re-engaged with schools in Bungay and with the wider family of Catholic schools. As a result, it has become a more outward looking community and opportunities for pupils to work with their peers from other schools have been widened. For example, able scientists and mathematicians have joined other local pupils for workshops in science and mathematics at the local high school.

Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning were a strength at the time of the last inspection and this remains the case. Where teaching was previously not sufficiently strong to ensure all pupils concentrated fully, support has been put in place so that the quality of teaching is better, expectations are higher and pupils learn well. The youngest pupils really enjoyed learning about capacity. The teacher made good use of the interactive whiteboard to demonstrate empty, half full and full but had the flexibility and confidence to allow time for pupils to explore themes around freezing, liquids and solids, before going outside to demonstrate capacity practically with water and beakers. Differentiation to ensure all pupils received the right amount of challenge and support was well demonstrated in a Key Stage 2 mathematics lesson, where pupils were quickly moved on when they had

demonstrated mastery of one aspect of multiplication. The older pupils' very dramatic re-enactment of a scene from an Arthurian legend was equally, but differently, impressive. Teaching assistants continue to support learning well.

Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning, including teachers' planning, frequently and effectively. There is a good focus on how well teachers have done against earlier areas for improvement and an explicit link between the quality of teaching and how much progress pupils make. The headteacher is able to articulate very clearly exactly why teaching has been judged as it has.

The governing body has moved quickly to improve communication with parents. The headteacher has written a detailed letter explaining the steps the school is taking in order to improve. Information about staffing, and plans to appoint a permanent headteacher have been shared. Plans are underway to re-launch the school website as an aid to communication. The first parent forum has been held, with more planned. The mathematics mornings for parents and pupils continue to be popular. Because the governing body is now better informed about pupils' achievement, and the quality of teaching, and has undertaken additional training, it is better placed to question the school about how well it is doing. A review of governance is planned for the autumn term.

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 is making good use of mutual support from a range of local schools to improve the quality of teaching and broaden opportunities for staff and pupils. Senior leaders have valued the support provided by the local authority link adviser. The school improvement board has provided additional governors and worked with them to agree a range of explicit actions to further strengthen leadership and management.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Suffolk local authority and the Catholic Diocese of East Anglia.

Yours sincerely

Robert Lovett
Her Majesty's Inspector