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Mr Nicholas Collins
Headteacher
St Francis Xavier Catholic Primary School
Roberts Road
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South Yorkshire
DN4 0JN

Dear Mr Collins

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Francis Xavier Catholic Primary School, Doncaster

Following my visit to your school on 16 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 February 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:

- eliminate the remaining cases of less effective progress for certain groups of pupils, in certain year groups and subjects, especially mathematics, and raise standards so they compare favourably with national age-related expectations.

Evidence

During my visit, I met with you, your deputy headteacher, two governors and your local authority (LA) standards and effectiveness partner (STEP). I spoke to a Diocese inspector, and pupils, teachers and their assistants about their work. I studied attendance, progress and behaviour data, action plans and monitoring records of teaching. I visited each class in the school, including Early Years Foundation Stage

provision, and examined pupils' books and folders. I read a review by the local leader of education (LLE) working with the school.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection two teachers have resigned and one member of the senior leadership team has returned from maternity leave.

Main findings

The school's leaders, with the support of some key strategic partners have orchestrated a series of improvement measures which are bearing fruit. The school is well-placed to get to good ahead of the prescribed timescales, subject to continued and sustained further development, and the effective resolution of the remaining shortcomings.

Inspection evidence and the school's latest progress data indicate substantial improvement in the standards attained when compared with national averages and the proportions of pupils who have met or exceeded age-related expectations for their rates of progress, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and at Key Stages 1 and 2. However, pupils' progress in mathematics, Year 3 and Year 4, and for the most-able in Key Stage 1, is not as consistently effective as pupils' accomplishments elsewhere.

It is clear from lesson drop-ins, examining pupils' books and talking to staff and pupils that staff have taken on board the training, advice and guidance to increase their effectiveness. By and large pupils' work was not too easy or too hard and they received good guidance on how to develop their knowledge and improve their work. Pupils have chances to consolidate their understanding of key concepts by applying what they've learnt in different contexts. They were also extending and using more accurately their mathematical vocabulary and skills. However, a degree of inconsistency in impact remains across year groups, subjects and for groups of pupils, which needs purging as a matter of urgency. The inconsistency encompasses expectations of what pupils are capable of, the quality of marking and feedback, and the focus on accelerated learning and correcting pupils' misconceptions.

Current attendance and persistent absence levels in the school compare favourably with national averages. Whilst the total number of behaviour incidents is quite low, staff know they must do more to curb the actions of a small group of pupils who regularly transgress.

Underpinning the gains secured is more regular and robust monitoring, and the holding of all staff to account, for the impact of their work, and pupils' outcomes rigorously. Target-setting, assessment and intervention procedures are more exacting, accurate and reliable. This is helping to ensure pupils on the whole receive a more bespoke package of delivery and support that meets their needs and promotes their faster development.

Governors have benefited from effective coaching by the STEP and have added greater professional challenge, through more incisive monitoring, questioning and interrogation of the information presented to them, to their unwavering support of the school.

The school's improvement plans are generally sound. However, they must ensure that there are suitable and distinct monitoring and evaluation arrangements for each target, and make certain they are clear how they are going to measure success against each key priority.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. In the meantime, the school should email a termly progress report to me.

External support

The school has brokered wide-ranging assistance to help it get to good. They are working with an LLE from King Edward School, an LA STEP, and a renowned Diocese inspector. This challenge and support is proving effective and is accelerating the school's improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

John Young

Her Majesty's Inspector