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20 July 2014

Nyree Martin
Headteacher
St Benet's Catholic Primary School
Ringsfield Road
Beccles
NR34 9PQ

Dear Ms Martin

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

Following my visit to your school on 15 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. The school should take further action to:

- closely monitor the quality of teaching and use this information to ensure that the most-able pupils make better than expected progress
- strengthen links with parents and within the local community.

Evidence

During the visit I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, Year 5 and 6 pupils, the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was reviewed. I made brief visits to all four classes in the school and examined documents related to the outcomes of monitoring activities, safeguarding and achievement information.

Context

Since the last inspection the school has appointed two teachers, a business manager and finance staff. These appointments are to start from September 2014

Main findings

The school leaders and governors have acted swiftly to address the areas which were identified as requiring improvement in the previous inspection report. School leaders have produced a detailed action plan which is being used to improve the quality of teaching over time, address staffing issues, improve communication with parents and strengthen governance. The action plan has clear, measurable targets but lacks some clarity about who is responsible for each priority.

The quality of teaching is improving. The school has put into place a timetable of checking and training for teachers. The school is working more closely with St Edmund's Catholic School, its sister school in the federation and is also starting to form effective links with other cluster schools. This was seen in action during the visit where effective techniques were being shared between Early Years Foundation Stage practitioners within the federation. This process of collaboration has proved to be effective and is to continue as teachers plan and check their work together.

Not enough of the most-able pupils achieve the higher levels, particularly in mathematics. Nevertheless, teachers' expectations of pupils are rising both in terms of attitudes to learning and the standard of work they expect from the pupils. Pupils recognise some of the changes that have occurred since the previous inspection and talk about being given harder work which challenges them more.

School leaders and teachers have a better understanding of the link between good teaching and good achievement. Teachers are better at explaining to pupils how they can improve their work and pupils now understand how this fits with the progress they are making. The school leaders and governors have yet to fully link the impact of teachers' performance and pay to the achievement of the pupils they teach.

Senior leaders have worked closely with the school improvement board and governing body to minimise the impact of historical staffing issues. The school is fully staffed for September 2014 with key appointments in both teaching and non-teaching areas. The school leaders and governors have made in-roads into the issue of communication with parents and the wider community. Senior leaders and the governing body have set up a parent forum and have other events planned to encourage parents to take a more active role in the life of the school. A new information system is being investigated by a governor focus group and this will improve the flow of information between school and home as the current system has proved ineffective.

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 support from a number of local schools and the local authority to improve the quality of teaching. The recent introduction of associate governors by the school improvement board has improved the effectiveness of the governing body. They have brought a wealth of expertise which has strengthened and encouraged current governors to seek training and improve their own effectiveness.

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

Yours sincerely

Pete Sewell
Associate Inspector