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Mr Paul O'Hara
St Cuthbert's RC Primary School
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Dear Mr O'Hara

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit to St Cuthbert's RC Primary School on 10 September 2014

Following my visit to your school on 10 September 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 not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement.

The school should take immediate action to:

- revise the action plan so that it:
 - gives a clear indication of when you expect the school to be good
 - shows precisely how much improvement in attainment and progress is expected in specific subjects and for particular groups of pupils between now and then
 - includes specific figures, so that the school will be able to determine whether enough improvement has been made at key points during that period
 - indicates clearly what particular actions it will take to improve teaching and learning, especially in relation to mixed age classes

and where teachers have moved from one year group or key stage to another.

- ensure the plan is very clear about how support from other agencies will to help to improve the quality of teaching
- make rigorous use of information from lesson observations, work scrutiny and progress tracking, to identify individual teachers' needs and provide the right support to help them improve their practice.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, three members of the Governing Body including the Vice Chair, representatives of the local authority and the Diocese and six pupils selected at random from Years 4 to 6. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss the actions taken since the most recent inspection of the school. I also evaluated the school action plan and examined a number of documents and the single central record.

Context

Since the inspection, two teachers have left the school and two new phase leaders have been appointed.

Main findings

Since the inspection, you have re-grouped pupils so that there are now three mixed classes of Year 3 and Year 4 pupils and three mixed classes of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils. You have extended the senior leadership team to include two newly appointed phase leaders and have also assigned some teachers to different year groups from those with which they worked in the past. You have introduced a new handwriting policy, revised the approach to planning and marking and updated the staff handbook, to ensure greater consistency of approach across the school. Considerable improvements have also been made to the school buildings. The pupils to whom I spoke were particularly pleased with these.

You have conducted a number of learning walks and some lesson observations. A review of the governing body has been undertaken and an action plan for further development produced. The three governors to whom I spoke were aware of the need to ensure that their work focuses more closely on the raising of standards.

You have produced an action plan to which staff and governors have contributed. However, this plan only covers one year and does not indicate precisely when you expect St Cuthbert's to be a good school.

At several points within the plan, the sections on 'actions', 'monitoring' and 'impact' are confused with each other. For example, under the 'actions' column in section 2.2, you include the statement: *'All staff are secure in their knowledge of age related*

expectation and are able to set challenging targets'. This is not an action but an outcome. An action would be the provision of advice and training for teachers which would lead to the level of understanding that you describe. In section 3.1, the information on monitoring appears in the 'actions' column. In section 3.2, one of the 'actions' reads: *'Standards in writing improve so that they are more consistently in line and ultimately higher than the national average'*. This would be more appropriately placed in the 'outcomes' column.

Too many of your intended outcomes lack precision. For example, to say that *'Attainment rises to above the national expectation'* does not indicate by how much or by when national expectations will be exceeded. Without such information, it will be very difficult for you and your governors to assess what improvement has been made and whether it is happening quickly enough.

You have made several significant changes to the roles and responsibilities of staff. However, there is no indication of what specific training you will provide to support these changes. For example it is not clear how you will ensure that teachers who have never taught a particular year group, or classes of children from more than one year group, will be given the skills to do so. Similarly, it is not clear how you intend to use the expertise of the two newly appointed phase leaders to help improve the school.

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

I will return to the school early next term to monitor the improvements. We agreed that, in the meantime, you will send me a copy of the revised action plan for comment.

External support

Through the local authority and the Diocese, you and your staff have access to a wide range of additional advice and support from a number of successful teachers, headteachers and leaders. You are very appreciative of this additional help but are not using it effectively. This is because you are not clear about what your goals are and how the additional support can help you to achieve them.

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

Yours sincerely

Aelwyn Pugh

Her Majesty's Inspector