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2 October 2014

Ms Sarah Joynes  
Headteacher  
Alice Ingham Roman Catholic Primary School  
Millgate  
Halifax Road  
Rochdale  
Lancashire  
OL16 2NU

Dear Ms Joynes

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Alice Ingham Roman Catholic Primary School, Rochdale**

Following my visit to your school on 1 October 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 June 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- refine the post-Ofsted action plan so that the school's targets for attainment and progress are broken down to show senior leaders' expectations for the different groups of pupils in the school
- include milestones in the plan to enable senior leaders and governors to measure the progress that groups of pupils are making against their targets
- clarify who is responsible for each of the actions in the plan to enable governors to hold individuals to account for the impact of their work
- maintain a rapid pace of change to maximise the impact of your work on outcomes for pupils

- make sure that the school's website meets statutory requirements.

## **Evidence**

During my visit I held meetings with you and other members of the senior leadership team, two members of the governing body including the Chair of Governors, a group of enthusiastic and friendly Year 6 pupils, the subject leaders for literacy and numeracy and a representative from the local authority. These meetings allowed me to discuss the actions you and your colleagues are taking to improve the school since the most recent inspection. You accompanied me on a tour of the school which gave me the opportunity to see the children at work. I scrutinised senior leaders' evaluation of how well the school is doing and the post-Ofsted school improvement plan, written in response to the findings of inspectors at the last inspection. I examined the work in a sample of pupils' books to determine how well work is matched to pupils' capability and the quality of teachers' marking. I also examined the school's website to determine its compliance with statutory regulations.

## **Context**

Since the inspection two teachers have joined the staff. Governors are currently recruiting for a permanent member of staff to cover a vacancy that has arisen for a teacher in lower Key Stage 2. With the agreement of governors, you have restructured senior leadership and the team now comprises two assistant headteachers and you.

## **Main findings**

During my meetings with key stakeholders there was unanimous agreement that the findings of the most recent inspection were the right ones for the school.

The post-Ofsted school improvement plan is very detailed. There is a clear focus on addressing each of the areas for improvement identified by inspectors at the previous inspection. The school's attainment and progress targets for 2015 are given prominence at the front of the plan, emphasising that the focus of the plan is to improve pupils' outcomes at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. You and your colleagues have already begun to take effective action to address a number of the improvement priorities. For example you have deployed two teaching assistants to provide dedicated support for pupils falling behind in literacy and numeracy, introduced a new method for measuring pupils' progress and initiated a new marking policy. These initiatives have not been in place long enough to demonstrate their full impact on pupils' outcomes. Senior leaders are under no illusions that 'action and impact' go hand-in-hand and it is important that they increase the pace of these changes to ensure that benefits for pupils are maximised.

Although the plan is comprehensive providing you and your colleagues with an effective programme for improving the school, it is not sharp enough. The

attainment and progress targets for 2015 are not broken down into senior leaders' expectations for the different groups of pupils in the school. Further, there are no milestones to enable you and the governors to measure the progress that the school is making towards achieving each of these targets. Colleagues responsible for individual improvement priorities are not always identified and as a result it is not clear who will be held to account for the impact of the actions taken to improve the school.

Senior leaders have introduced a strategy for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. This includes regular, short visits to classrooms and the scrutiny of work in pupils' books. This is enabling you and your colleagues to identify good practice and highlight those aspects of teaching that require improvement. During my meeting with subject leaders they described some early signs of the positive impact that this strategy is having on teachers' performance and pupils' attitudes to learning. You will gain a much more secure assessment of the impact of these monitoring activities when you collect data on pupils' progress at the end of the first half of the autumn term.

During my meeting with subject leaders they pointed out their awareness of shortcomings in the teaching of mathematics. They indicated that they are taking steps to drive forward improvements including introducing more problem solving and involving pupils in mathematical investigations. Their intention is to challenge pupils to apply their mathematics' skills in new and unfamiliar contexts and so deepen their understanding.

The governors I met demonstrated their commitment to the school and stressed that they believe it is a place where children are nurtured and well cared for. They have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development but are less sure of the impact of the work being done to improve the school.

The Year 6 pupils I spoke with were able to describe the changes they have witnessed since the inspection and the positive impact these changes are having on their learning. Greater access to laptop computers in class are enabling them to use the internet as a resource in topic work and mathematics. The pupils were able to describe how their targets had been set, what their current level of attainment is and what they need to do to improve. They told me that pupils who are falling behind are now receiving extra help through the school's newly established 'Learning Zone'.

My scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that their books are marked regularly and in line with the school's recently revised marking policy. Teachers' use of different coloured pens enables students to identify the strengths in a piece of work and what they need to do to improve it. However, there is still work to be done to take full advantage of the impact that marking has on pupils' progress. Some teachers' comments relating to how a piece of work could be improved are not precise

enough. As a consequence pupils are not always able to make the necessary changes to a piece of work to make it better.

In preparing for my visit I took the opportunity to evaluate the quality of the school's website and I shared my evaluation with you. Currently, the website does not meet statutory requirements as some information is missing. For example the requirement to publish curriculum information for each year group in the school is not being met.

### **External support**

The local authority adviser is providing effective support to senior leaders and governors as they tackle the issues raised by the inspection. Senior leaders and governors have received training from the adviser in how to interpret the data relating to pupils' attainment and progress. This training is enabling governors to hold staff to account for the standards achieved by the pupils. The adviser has also provided effective support to you and your colleagues in helping you implement more rigorous systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. Further work by the local authority is also planned, including a review of the overall effectiveness of the school, which is due to take place in the middle of October. The intention is that this will provide the school with a 'health check' and lay down a marker for you and the governors to gauge the progress being made against each of the priorities in the improvement plan.

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

Yours sincerely

Charles Lowry

**Her Majesty's Inspector**