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3 October 2014

Catherine Hobbs  
Headteacher  
St Swithun's Catholic Primary School  
Taswell Road  
Southsea  
Hampshire  
PO5 2RG

Dear Miss Hobbs

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Swithun's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 3 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.

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 strengthen the school improvement plan by:

- adding precise actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and ensuring progress is measured every term and links directly to outcomes for pupils.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I met with you and your senior management team, subject leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and chair of the curriculum and standards committee to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I spoke to a representative from the local authority and you introduced me to a representative

from the Diocese. We visited classrooms, spoke to some of the pupils and looked at work in their books. I reviewed a range of other documentation and evaluated the school improvement plan.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection the school has appointed 8 new teachers, three of whom are newly qualified teachers. A new assistant headteacher for teaching and learning, who splits her time with another local Catholic primary school in Portsmouth, has joined the senior management team.

## **Main findings**

You and your senior leadership team have continued to provide strong and clear direction to the school. Since the last inspection you have rightly prioritised the establishment of your staff team. You have worked hard to appoint the teachers you want for each classroom. You have also successfully strengthened the leadership team by brokering the services of the assistant headteacher for teaching and learning every other week. This has enabled you to focus effectively on checking the quality of teaching, as well as making sure new teachers have settled quickly into the routines of the school. The work you have done has clarified to staff what is expected of them and this has brought about a much needed culture of improvement in the school.

The school improvement plan that you have developed gives a good overview of actions you plan to take. However, it is not specific enough about how you will tackle issues and how these actions will lead to improved outcomes for pupils at the school. It is also not clear enough about what you expect to achieve at different intervals across the academic year. This is important if governors are going to be able to challenge your work in implementing the plan, and understand what impact it is having on the quality of teaching and achievement of pupils.

The governing body has continued to improve under the strong leadership of the chair. Governors are clear about how they intend to monitor the work of the school. Their plans, aimed at helping them to continue to improve their effectiveness, show they have a better understanding of the need to challenge information that is provided to them. Subject leaders at the school are a relatively new team and are beginning to develop their roles. Your inclusion in the 'getting to good' professional development programme run by the local authority is an appropriate strategy to further develop the skills and effectiveness of leaders.

Staff now know that they can only be judged to be 'good' if all groups of pupils make enough progress. You are aware of the need to ensure that teaching is consistently 'good' across the school. During our visits to classrooms we saw that teachers are

now attempting to match work to the different needs of pupils. As we discussed, some teachers are much better at this than others. Similarly, marking in books varies in quality. The work you have done to improve links between subjects was evident in a Year 6 class that we observed. Pupils were working on pastel pictures inspired by what they had learnt about the Blitz. This linked well to work seen in the same pupils' writing books, which was also inspired by their study of World War 2.

The improvements to teaching have started to have an impact on the achievement of pupils. For example, more children left the Early Years Foundation Stage working at the expected level in 2014 than 2013. Similarly, more pupils reached the expected levels at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2. Too few pupils, however, achieved the higher levels, reflecting that there continues to be too little challenge for the more able pupils. There is also more work to be done on the progress being made by pupils who receive extra funding, known as the pupil premium.

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**

You continue to make good use of local authority support. This is typically tailored to the needs of the school and what you have asked for. Some of the support has sensibly been reserved until the exact needs of new teachers are identified.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Barnes

**Seconded Inspector**