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3 October 2014

Miss Anne Goddard
Headteacher
The Cathedral Catholic Primary School, Lancaster
Balmoral Road
Lancaster
Lancashire
LA1 3BT

Dear Miss Goddard

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Cathedral Catholic Primary School, Lancaster, Lancashire

Following my visit to your school on 2 October 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 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:

- agree detailed and measureable success criteria, based on pupil outcomes, by which leaders and governors can check on the impact of school improvement work
- work with the local authority to organise immediate support for leaders at all levels, so they are better able to monitor and improve the quality of teaching
- establish links with good and outstanding schools in order to build strategic leadership capacity at all levels in the school.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, with representatives of the Governing Body and with a representative of the local authority. These meetings were held in order to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I made short visits to each class and spoke separately to a group of pupils. I also scrutinised

pupils' work from a selection of classes. I evaluated the school improvement plan and other documents relating to changes that have been made since the last inspection.

Context

A new Chair of Governors and four new foundation governors have been appointed since the section 5 inspection in June 2014.

Main findings

School leaders describe the findings of the recent inspection as a 'wake-up call'. Governors, in particular, have taken immediate action to challenge the existing culture in the school, in order to improve outcomes for pupils.

Leaders have reviewed a number of teaching and learning policies. These give clear expectations for what is required from the setting of homework, the presentation of work in pupils' books, and teachers marking of pupils' work. Workbooks show that teachers have responded positively to these changes. Pupils speak enthusiastically about 'fix-it Fridays', when they have scheduled time to correct and improve their work. However, not all teachers have high enough expectations, nor are they providing pupils with sufficiently challenging targets. This is limiting the impact of the strategies leaders have employed to improve teaching and learning.

Leaders' roles and responsibilities are now better defined and a schedule for monitoring the quality of teaching is in place. However, it is not yet clear how leaders will be supported in performing their roles, or how they will evaluate the impact of their work. The headteacher is aware that the schools' systems for performance management needs to make this explicit.

Governors have undertaken the recommended review of governance. They have restructured and have established a standards and effectiveness committee. They are now much better placed to hold school leaders to account for the school's improvement. Governors have taken decisive action to strengthen leadership and build succession planning, by creating and advertising for the new post of deputy headteacher.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. I intend to return to the school next term in order to evaluate the impact all leaders are having on improving the effectiveness of the school.

External support

The local authority adviser understands the challenges facing the school. The local authority has scheduled a full review of leadership and management, and of

educational provision for later this half-term. This will identify the support that leaders need in order to bring about urgent improvements. The local authority and diocese have worked quickly and effectively to strengthen governance and to support governors in presenting greater challenge to school leaders.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director for Children and Young People for Lancashire, and to the Head of the Education Service for the Diocese of Lancashire.

Yours sincerely

Philippa Darley

Her Majesty's Inspector