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Mrs Jacqui Richards
Headteacher
St John Fisher Catholic Primary School
Burney Drive
Loughton
IG10 2DY

Dear Mrs Richards

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 15 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 July 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:

- define the roles of middle leaders more precisely so that they have a clearer understanding of their responsibilities
- create opportunities for teachers and subject leaders to observe and learn from good or better teaching and subject leadership in other schools
- ensure that more precise and measurable targets are incorporated into the school improvement plan so that school leaders, including governors, can review progress.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, eight middle leaders and the Chair of the Governing Body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also met with a representative from the local authority. I accompanied you on visits to all classes and looked at a selection of pupils' books. I evaluated the school's action plan and associated documents. I also met with three newly qualified teachers to discuss the support that have received since starting at the school in September 2014. Nine members of the governing body attended the feedback meeting at the end of the inspection.

Context

Since the previous inspection, five new teachers have been appointed, three of whom are newly qualified teachers.

Main findings

You have taken appropriate action to address the issues identified at the previous inspection. You have created an improvement plan which gives details of the actions which the school intends to take in order to be judged as good at the next inspection. Although this plan identifies appropriate priorities it does not set out clear targets or timescales which senior leaders, including governors, can use to check whether sufficient progress is being made.

Middle leaders have been appointed to improve key aspects of the school's work. The quality of middle leadership was previously a weakness which limited developments at the school in English and mathematics. During my meeting with middle leaders they showed great enthusiasm for their new roles. However, they are not yet clear about the exact nature of their responsibilities or your expectations of their performance.

You have introduced more regular checks on pupils' work in order to hold staff to account for progress of the pupils they teach and ensure that agreed policies are being adhered to. Teachers value the constructive feedback which they receive after work scrutinies and classroom observations.

Members of staff and governors were disappointed at the negative responses made by some parents on Parent View prior to the previous inspection. You have acted promptly to address this issue. You held a meeting for parents to discuss the school's plans for improvement, including the changes you have made which are aimed at improving behaviour. The meeting was very well attended and appreciated by those present. Further improvements to the way the school interacts with parents are planned, including more regular updates on pupils' progress.

The Chair of the Governing Body demonstrated a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. He believes that the school has the capacity to improve but recognises that systems for checking the work of the school, and supporting teachers to become better, need to be more rigorous and effective. Governors believe that they are now better placed to support and challenge school leaders. They recognise the need for rapid improvement in leadership and teaching. They have the expertise to both challenge weaknesses and support developments.

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 local authority is providing a good level of challenge and support to the school. The school has accessed a number of training opportunities for staff through the local authority and an improvement adviser visits the school regularly to monitor progress. The local authority understands the school's strengths and weaknesses well and has recently set up an improvement board in order to work with governors to check on the progress being made and to hold the school's leadership team to account more effectively for the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

I will return to the school before July 2015 to review progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow
Her Majesty's Inspector