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22 October 2014

Mrs Helen Halliwell  
Headteacher  
St Patrick's RC Primary and Nursery School  
Lee Street  
Oldham  
Lancashire  
OL8 1EF

Dear Mrs Halliwell

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Patrick's RC Primary and Nursery School, Oldham**

Following my visit to the school on 21 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:

- quickly improve children's learning and progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception)
- identify why pupils' writing is below average for their age and take swift actions to improve pupils' writing skills.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection I met with you and the deputy headteacher. I had a discussion with a representative of the local authority and with a representative of the diocese. I met with two members of the governing body who are also part of the newly-formed school improvement board. I met with a group of pupils and looked briefly through some school documents including the improvement plan.

## **Context**

Since the inspection, a teacher has left the school and a new teacher appointed. A teacher remains absent on long-term sickness and the class is being taught by a supply teacher who is also a newly-qualified teacher. The SENco (coordinator for special educational needs) remains at the school but the role has been re-allocated to the deputy headteacher. The governing body has distributed its roles and responsibilities to a newly-formed school improvement board which comprises of a small group of professional representing the diocese, the local authority, and the governing body.

## **Main findings**

Since the inspection the full set of end-of-year results have been collected and collated. These results show no improvement in children's attainment by the end of reception. A very low proportion of children attained the level of development typical for a four- or five-year old and no girls attained the expected level. There is a relatively high number of adults teaching and supporting in the Early Years Foundation Stage but there seems to be little impact of this support. The school should take swift action to make sure a higher proportion of children are ready for Year 1 and make better progress in Nursery and Reception. The school should review how adults are deployed and how effective they are in helping children to make progress.

In contrast, by the end of Year 6 standards increased in reading and writing but particularly in mathematics. A higher proportion of pupils attained the higher Level 5 in reading and mathematics. The proportion of pupils making the expected and more than the expected progress also increased.

An external review of the use and impact of the pupil premium grant was completed by Oasis Limeside Primary School. Senior leaders have already started to put some of the recommendations into action such as appointing a middle leader to lead and manage the support for pupil premium pupils and checking on the attendance of the pupils more closely. The changes have already started to improve teaching of this groups of pupils through much more careful checking of their attainment and progress.

Teachers and senior leaders have taken swift action following the inspection to tackle some important aspects of teaching. Improvements to marking for example mean that pupils know clearly what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils who spoke with me said they are now able to respond to the teachers' marking and comments at the start of mathematics and English lessons. This means they have the chance to correct, edit, and improve their work or to extend their thinking before new learning is introduced.

Pupils complete an extended piece of writing once a week. This method of teaching writing has not been effective in improving pupils' writing skills. The school should swift take action to find out the reasons for the well below average attainment in writing and then to put measures in place to improve the teaching of writing, particularly of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Pupils' attendance has improved. Senior leaders have been proactive in identifying good practice at other schools and replicating or adapting these practices to suit St Patrick's. A designated member of staff is now responsible for monitoring attendance closely and for calling parents to find out the whereabouts of the children. There are new awards in place to reward punctuality and attendance and to sanction parents who do not send their children to school by for example taking them for extended holidays abroad.

Pupils that I spoke with considered behaviour has improved so they are now able to concentrate more in lessons. The school has acted on a behaviour and safeguarding review which took place recently and as a result there have been improvements to record keeping.

There have been improvements to leadership. There is more frequent and more detailed monitoring of teachers' planning and their teaching. There is now a good system in place to follow up any areas for improvement identified because of the monitoring. The review of governance has taken place and action taken to improve has led to improved quality of governance. Governors challenge school leaders more rigorously. Meetings are more frequent and are tightly focussed on checking improvements since the inspection. Senior leaders and governors now need to amend the action plan further to focus on the actions that need to be taken to be judged as good at the next inspection. At the moment the whole year is mapped out in detail. However it is too difficult to plan effectively actions that should be taken in a year's time so I have asked senior leaders to prioritise actions in the plan over a shorter time period.

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 and the diocese have invested a significant amount of support to the school. In addition to the school improvement board which meets fortnightly, the local authority has brokered support from another school: St Aidan and St Oswald. As a result of the support provided so far there has been an improvement in teachers' planning, there is a new and improved system in place to track pupils' progress, and there is a significantly greater level of challenge for the school.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Oldham and as below.

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools.