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6 November 2014

David Hennessey
Headteacher
SS Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School
Cricket Green
Mitcham
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Dear Mr Hennessey

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to SS Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 4 November 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:

- ensure that good quality teaching enables more-able pupils to make more rapid progress.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, pupils, English and mathematics leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I reviewed various documents relating to the school's performance including minutes of recent governing body meetings and the school action plan.

You gave me a tour of the school during which we visited each classroom, looked at pupils' workbooks and spoke to them about their work.

Context

Since the last inspection there have been several changes to the school's staffing. Five teachers have joined the school including one responsible for teaching modern foreign languages. A teacher has been promoted to lead the development of mathematics. There have been several changes to the school's support staff. The Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed recently. The governing body is currently in the process of reconstituting.

Main findings

Leaders have acted swiftly to tackle the key areas for improvement. Teachers report that there is now a clear vision for the future and, in particular, for pupils' achievement. The action plan addresses the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. It prioritises, rightly, actions relating to improving the quality of teaching. The development of leadership and management focuses on improving the skills of middle leaders so that they are better able to support senior leaders in their quest to improve the quality of teaching. Middle leaders now play a significantly greater role in the school and have grown in confidence as a result of the training and support they have received. Targets for pupils' attainment and progress are aspirational and are set out term by term. This will enable leaders and the governing body to check that progress is being made at the expected rate. The action plan could be improved by defining more clearly the timescales for actions.

Pupils now have fewer workbooks. Their topic and English work is recorded in the same book so that equally high standards are expected of written English in all subjects. Mathematics and religious education are recorded in separate books. Older pupils describe a renewed pride in their work since beginning their new books this term. They are keen to point out the school's mission statement and logo, both displayed on the covers of their workbooks.

A new approach to teaching mathematics has been introduced. It is intended to ensure that pupils gain a deep and thorough understanding of concepts; pupils use practical apparatus before moving to pictorial and abstract representations of concepts. Early indications are that pupils benefit from this emphasis on ensuring a thorough understanding of concepts. Work is provided at different levels so that pupils find it neither too hard nor too easy. Older pupils say they feel challenged by their work and that teachers have high expectations of them. However, some more-able pupils do not progress as quickly as they could because they repeat work of a similar nature when they have already demonstrated their proficiency. Staff have

held a meeting with parents to outline the approach used in school and to suggest ways in which support can be provided at home.

The marking policy has been reviewed leading to a more consistent approach being adopted throughout the school. The quality of teachers' comments has improved. Written comments prompt pupils to reflect on, and improve, their work. They often challenge pupils to apply these improvements in subsequent tasks. Teachers review pupils' work in detail enabling them to gain an accurate picture of each pupil's level of understanding. This leads to more precisely targeted recommendations for development. However, on occasions, teachers do not insist sufficiently rigorously on pupils taking on board their comments; this results in errors being repeated.

Leaders now check the quality of teaching on a more frequent basis. They 'drop in' to lessons, speaking with pupils about their work, and checking that they are making sufficient progress. Judgements about the quality of teaching are based predominantly on the progress pupils make. Teachers receive feedback about their practice with clear actions identified for improvement. Leaders check that these have been implemented and that they have the intended impact on pupils' achievement. Teachers speak highly of the regular and focussed advice they receive from senior and, increasingly, middle leaders and are keen to improve their practice. Weekly staff training now has a greater impact, with teachers reporting that it is more closely focussed on the school's key issues.

Governors have fully embraced the recommendations of the initial review of governance carried out by a local authority adviser. A further review is planned to take place this month. Expectations of governors have been raised. They are now expected to commit to a set of principles centred on carrying out their role robustly. This includes keeping up to date with educational changes, visiting school regularly to check on progress for themselves, and having a professional approach to their role. A recent audit of skills has enabled the governing body to recruit new members more strategically than in the past.

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

A local authority adviser has provided a variety of effective support since the inspection. This includes working alongside leaders to scrutinise pupils' work and to observe teaching. The training he has provided for middle leaders is enabling them to play a more effective part in school improvement. He has also brokered the support of the headteacher of a local outstanding school. She will work with the headteacher to validate judgments about the quality of teaching and of pupils' work,

and provide additional challenge. Plans are in place for leaders at both schools to work with their counterparts and for teachers to link with their year group partner.

The archdiocese is providing training for leaders to improve their skills in observing teaching. It has also provided mathematics training for teachers.

A National Leader of Governance is working with the Chair of the Governing Body to ensure that, through the process of reconstitution, the governing body is well placed to offer the required challenge and support to school leaders.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Merton and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Loukes
Her Majesty's Inspector