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20 October 2014

Mr Con Todd  
Headteacher  
St Bede's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School  
Ridge Terrace  
Bedlington  
Northumberland  
NE22 6EQ

Dear Mr Todd

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Bede's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Northumberland**

Following my visit to your school on 17 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:

- ensure that the school's action plan:
  - includes measurable improvement targets so that leaders and governors can check whether planned improvements are working
  - is clear who is responsible for carrying out the actions in the plan and that the timescales in which they should be carried out are clearly specified
  - is regularly monitored to judge the impact on pupils' progress.
  
- establish a governors' steering group, including representatives of the local authority and the diocese, to oversee improvement work in the school.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the Chair and five other members of the governing body, and representatives of the local authority and the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated and discussed with senior leaders and I undertook a brief visit to six classes in the school with the deputy headteacher in order to speak with pupils and to review the work in their books.

## **Context**

The school is currently in the process of defederating from a local secondary school with which it shares a headteacher and governing body. A new headteacher has been appointed and will shortly take up post for the remainder of this school year. A new governing body, containing many members of the current federation governing body, is being established.

## **Main findings**

The school action plan addresses each of the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. In many areas, however, the plan lacks measurable outcomes and fails to identify who is responsible both for leading each area and for monitoring the success or otherwise of their work. The school has agreed that the plan will be updated as soon as the new headteacher is in post.

However, effective work to improve the impact of feedback on pupil progress is underway. The school marking policy has been updated and observations of books in lessons indicate that marking in the majority of classes is much more effective in helping pupils to know how to improve their work. There is also some evidence that work is now more closely matched to the ability of pupils and that this is having an impact on the progress of higher ability pupils. However, this is not yet happening consistently as, in some classes, pupils still do not routinely respond to comments and improve their work.

The school has made significant efforts to improve engagement with parents and the value of this work is reflected in the results from a recent parental questionnaire, which are much more positive than those at the time of the recent inspection. The pupil council has been re-established and pupils confirm that behaviour both in lessons and around the school has improved.

Governors and the diocese are supportive of the school leadership and are now better informed about the work of the school. The establishment of a governors' steering group will allow governors to more effectively challenge and support senior staff.

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 diocese were each aware of some of the areas for improvement identified at the inspection. The local authority has recently brokered support for senior and middle leadership although it is too early to measure the impact of this. The local authority and diocese will be represented on the new governors' steering group.

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

Yours sincerely

David Brown

**Her Majesty's Inspector**