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10 November 2014

Mrs Linda Davison
Headteacher
Holy Family Catholic Primary School
Old Hall Road
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Cheshire
M33 2JA

Dear Mrs Davison

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Trafford

Following my visit to your school on 7 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 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:

- work with your designated support headteacher to re-write the school improvement plan, ensuring that it details the actions that will be taken over the course of this year to improve the quality of teaching and the impact of leadership and management
- work with the local authority to agree appropriate targets for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in each year group
- ensure governors regularly check on the impact of leaders' actions by close reference to the targets set for pupil achievement.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and your deputy headteacher, to evaluate the school improvement plan and discuss the actions you have taken since the section 5 inspection in July. I met with a representative from the local authority and from the diocese of Shrewsbury. I also met with the headteacher from a local school who is supporting the school. I made short visits to each class and looked at samples of teachers' planning and a selection of pupils' workbooks from all classes. I met with three members of the governing body, including the new Chair of Governors. During the inspection, I scrutinised a range of information relating to the steps you are taking to improve the quality of teaching.

Context

Four new teachers have joined the school since the inspection in July, three of whom are newly qualified. Two new teaching assistants have been appointed. This has ensured that all classes now have additional teaching support. A new Chair of the Governing Body was elected this month. The local authority has arranged for the school to be supported by the headteacher and staff of Tyntesfield Primary School.

Main findings

In conjunction with the headteacher from the local partner school, you have conducted a full assessment of the skills of all teachers in the school. From this, you have established a programme of professional development that focusses strongly on building teachers' competencies in planning lessons that build on what pupils already know, understand and can do. Teachers' records shows they are now using pre-learning assessment tasks in order to inform their lessons for the following week. They are using this information to shape work for groups of pupils in their classes, as well as to inform them how to support individual pupils in their learning. This has led to an improved accuracy in their planning. However, teachers still need support in ensuring pupils of different abilities know exactly what is expected from them, so that all pupils are challenged to achieve the best they can.

You have worked with staff to write a number of new policies to guide their work, including one relating to improving the quality and consistency of teachers' marking. The application of this is still in its early stages, nevertheless it is clear that all teachers are marking pupils' work regularly, and that pupils are responding to the guidance they receive. There is less evidence, particularly in mathematics, that teachers are using this to identify those pupils who can move on to tackle more complex and difficult questions. As a result, the time teachers are investing in marking work so thoroughly, is not yet enabling pupils to make good progress.

You have conducted a number of monitoring activities to gain a view of how well teachers are applying the new guidance. You have gathered some useful information, but you do not yet focus carefully enough on how much progress

groups of pupils are making in lessons. Consequently, your guidance to teachers is not as detailed nor as developmental as it should be. You have also written a school improvement plan, which is similarly imprecise. It is not clear what actions will be taken and when, nor how you and governors will judge if they have been effective enough.

Governors have commissioned a National Leader of Governance (NLG) to conduct an external review of their effectiveness. This led to a new Chair being elected and a full assessment of members' current skills has been undertaken. Governors are very clear about the challenges that lie ahead and they have secured essential support from the NLG for the long-term development of the governing body. Governors have not yet started the review of their use of pupil premium funding, although this is planned for next term.

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 has acted quickly to organise additional support for the school from the leaders of Tyntesfield Primary School. This is proving to be highly effective. They are rightly focusing on building capacity in the school at all levels of leadership. They have quickly ascertained the guidance and strategies teachers need in order to improve their practice, and have ensured that the three newly qualified teachers have access to a weekly support programme. This work is already starting to build a greater consistency of approach to planning and assessment across all classes in the school.

I am copying this letter to Gary Nuttall, the Chair of the Governing Body, Ms Deborah Brownlee, the Director of Children, Families and Wellbeing for Trafford, and to Damian Cunningham, the Director of Schools for the Diocese of Shrewsbury.

Yours sincerely

Philippa Darley
Her Majesty's Inspector