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20 November 2014

Paul Collingwood
Headteacher
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Vaagen Road
Canvey Island
SS8 9DP

Dear Mr Collingwood

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Canvey Island

Following my visit to your school on 19 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 the school improvement plan includes every area for improvement identified in the previous inspection report
- ensure that the impact of school improvement activities is measured at regular times throughout the year
- make sure that members of the governing body provide an appropriate degree of challenge and that governance features in the school improvement plan.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and the deputy headteacher designate, pupils, two representatives from the local authority and two members of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. A telephone conversation took place with the Chair of the Governing Body. We visited every class to observe children at work and to look at their books. I also scrutinised the school's records of recruitment checks on staff.

Context

Since the previous inspection, governors have appointed a new deputy headteacher who starts in January 2015, when the current deputy headteacher retires. Both Key Stage 1 teachers left the school in August 2014 and have been replaced. Plans have been agreed to appoint an assistant headteacher for the Summer term 2015 in order to add capacity to the school's leadership.

Main findings

The school improvement plan addresses most, but not all, of the individual areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report. It does not identify how you will measure the success of your actions or how often during the school year. The improvement plan for governance does not identify how governors will become more effective.

Despite the weaknesses in school improvement planning, you are able to demonstrate that the quality of teaching over time is getting better through your scrutiny of pupils' books, observations of teaching and through your gathering of data on pupils' performance. This data suggests that pupils' progress in Year 6 is accelerating and their attainment is set to rise. Some observations of teaching continue to focus too much on what teachers are doing rather than what pupils are learning. You have rightly focused on raising the profile of mathematics teaching, and you make it clearer to pupils what they are expected to learn in all subjects. Time has been provided in lessons to allow pupils in Key Stage 2 to respond to their teachers' marking, although some make better use of this time than others. You are also using classroom displays to model good work and encourage pupils to work more independently. Teachers' marking, although not consistently strong, is becoming better at helping pupils understand what they have done well and how they can improve.

You are working well with teachers whose teaching is not consistently good to challenge the more-able pupils through their planning. Performance management targets set for teachers are more closely linked to pupils' outcomes than previously, although no arrangements are currently in place for the performance management of classroom assistants.

Members of the governing body have undergone an external review of their effectiveness. Historically, governors have relied too much on what they have been told by the headteacher, without asking for key information. Minutes of meetings have not reflected the necessary degree of challenge required. Governors have started to gather some pertinent information through their link visits to year groups, although not all of these visits have been followed up by notes of the visit or points for further action.

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

Prior to the last inspection, the local authority provided 'light touch' support to the school. Following the outcome of the last inspection, the amount of support provided has increased significantly. Weaker teaching is being supported through appropriate training and visits to other schools. The local authority also challenges school leaders and governors through its 'Improvement Board' which meets every half term. A consultant from the local authority has developed the role of the special educational needs co-ordinator so that she now provides more effective in-class support.

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

Yours sincerely

John Daniell
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