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Miss Denise McGroarty
Acting Headteacher
St George's Roman Catholic Primary School
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Eastfield
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North Yorkshire
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Dear Miss McGroarty

Requires improvement: second monitoring inspection visit to St George's Roman Catholic Primary School, North Yorkshire

Following my visit to your school on 18 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Governors and the Diocese are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- secure permanent arrangements for leadership of the school so that the recent improvements are sustained over time
- ensure that all pupils make at least expected progress with a high proportion making better than expected progress in all subjects
- ensure that assessments of pupils' progress as they move through the school are accurate
- improve the value of lesson observations undertaken by all leaders by focussing on the quality of learning and the extent to which teaching promotes it

- develop more effective strategies to enhance the progress made by pupils with special educational needs and those pupils receiving support as a result of Pupil Premium funding.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the acting headteacher, subject leaders, the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and the Director of Schools for the Diocese of Middlesbrough. The school improvement plans were evaluated. Visits with the acting headteacher were made to all classes.

Context

Since the previous inspection in June 2013 the school has had three headteachers. From the beginning of the spring term 2015 the school are planning to appoint two co-headteachers. They are currently joint headteachers of Our Lady and St Peter Roman Catholic Primary School, Bridlington. Although the school is located in the same diocese as St George's it is in a different local authority, East Riding of Yorkshire. The governing body are also looking to appoint a deputy headteacher for January 1 2015.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection the governors have been taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The Chair and the vice-chair are more effective in holding the senior leadership to account and are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The quality of teaching has improved with more that is consistently good. However, over the past twelve months the school has had a series of interim and short term headteachers and this has failed to deliver the effective and sustained leadership that the school needs and so the pace of improvement has stalled. The governing body has already taken action to ensure that the school gets back on track on its journey to becoming a good school. The proposed leadership arrangements with effect from 1 January 2015, brokered by the Diocese of Middlesbrough with the support of the local authority offers a well-considered strategy for securing strong sustainable leadership which is required to raise achievement.

The priorities for the incoming leadership are clear. The trend of achievement over time has plateaued because pupils' progress is not as good as it should be. This particularly applies to pupils with special educational needs and those in receipt of support from the Pupil Premium for whom progress is way behind that of their peers nationally. The current strategies used by the school to enhance the progress of pupils within these groups needs to be reviewed. While the quality of teaching overall is better than it was at the time of the previous inspection there remains room for further improvement particularly within Key Stage 2, where pupils' progress

in reading, writing and mathematics is not good enough. Furthermore, a legacy of weak teaching has resulted in pupils' having gaps in skills, knowledge and understanding and this is restricting pupils' achievement in the core subjects by the end of Year 6. The good teaching that is evident in Years 5 and 6 would more likely result in higher attainment if pupils were starting Year 5 with standards closer to that expected for their age. Systems are in place to track pupils' progress as they move through the school. However, the system is only as good as the accuracy of the assessments that teachers make. School leaders acknowledge that the validity of teacher assessment is questionable. The school should be able to provide evidence of pupils' progress and this must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The subject leaders responsible for English and mathematics have improved since the previous inspection. They are aware of the aspects relating to their subject that require improvement and have produced action plans that make reference to what it is that pupils will be expected to do as a result of planned initiatives. This is a significant step forward. The momentum required to drive improvement has not been helped by a lack of stability at senior leadership level. Middle leaders are more involved in checking provision and checking progress. But given that the major challenge facing the school is improving the progress of all pupils, visits to classrooms would be more constructive if observers focussed more on learning and how teaching promotes it.

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 provided effective support. But they have been thwarted by too many changes of headteacher and this has limited their impact. The action proposed by the Diocese and supported by the local authority to secure strong and sustainable senior leadership is innovative. It also illustrates their commitment to bringing about the improvements that are necessary.

As the school accelerates the pace of improvement it is imperative that the local authority not only maintains the level of support to the school but also regularly monitors the impact of the new leadership that is due to commence at the beginning of the spring term.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for North Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Keeler
Her Majesty's Inspector