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5 December 2014

Mrs Maria Cooper
Headteacher
St Joseph's RC Primary School, Todmorden
Wellington Road
Todmorden
Lancashire
OL14 5HP

Dear Mrs Cooper

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Joseph's RC Primary School, Todmorden, Calderdale

Following my visit to your school on 4 December 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the 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 September 2014. At its previous section 5 the school was also judged to require improvement. This monitoring inspection 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:

- strengthen the school improvement plan to include clear and measurable targets against which success can be judged over-time.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other leaders, members of the governing body, a group of pupils and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. The inspector also evaluated monitoring reports, the tracking of pupils' progress and reports on behaviour and attendance.

Context

Since the previous inspection, a newly appointed school improvement partner from the local authority has commenced working with senior leaders.

Main findings

Although clearly not expecting the outcomes of the inspection in September, senior leaders and governors have placed their huge disappointment with the judgement to one side and have intensified their efforts to tackle the issues required. All staff are stepping up to the mark and the collective responsibility for improving the school has grown. Immediate action has been taken to tighten procedures and strengthen the school improvement plan. However, some of the targets within the plan are not as sharp as they could be and are imprecise. This makes it difficult for governors to pinpoint with accuracy how well the school is improving over-time and the impact of their actions.

Pupils' behaviour and their wish to do well are strengthening further. They can sense that the school is getting better because inappropriate behaviour is far less frequent and pupils' movement around the school and outside is increasingly smooth and well ordered. They feel safe in school and say there is now little threat from bullying or harassment in any form. They report that the school teaches them about the dangers of each and how to prevent incidents occurring, which reflects the schools' recent work on promoting positive attitudes and good behaviour.

Governors demonstrate a strong understanding of the schools most pressing priorities and a resolve to challenge senior leaders and hold them to account. As a group, they understand the strengths in provision and where further improvements can be made.

Middle leadership is becoming sharper-edged. As a group they have an accurate view of the priorities for improvement and the action required to move the school forward. They are increasingly confident in monitoring and evaluating their areas of responsibility through, checking pupils' work, analysing data and through planning and teaching alongside each other.

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 is providing an effective level of challenge to the school, tailored well by the school improvement partner. The range and quality of support provided is helping to raise the confidence of staff and strengthen the skills of leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood
Her Majesty's Inspector