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Mrs Jane Chambers
Executive Headteacher
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School
Springfield Road
Wigan
Greater Manchester
WN6 7RH

Dear Mrs Chambers

Special measures monitoring inspection of Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 2 December 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. Other members of the governing body, including a representative of the diocese, and the external monitoring officer attended the feedback meeting. The executive headteacher and inspector visited all areas of the school to meet staff and pupils during lessons and break time. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

There have been no changes in staffing or governance since the inspection which judged the school to require special measures.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The executive headteacher and the senior leadership team at Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School have worked with the local authority, the governing body and the diocese to produce a combined action plan which addresses all the areas for improvement raised in the previous inspection report. The plan includes clear measurable targets and a robust monitoring and evaluation process focused on rapid improvement. The impact of the actions is evaluated by the school's leadership team and reported each half term to governors, the local authority and the diocese to check the actions are effective.

The local authority quickly responded to the inspection's recommendations. The review of governance and the external review of the pupil premium (additional government funding) are completed. The local authority provides support for the school to improve leadership skills through links with other schools and local leaders in education, namely: Lamberhead Green Primary, Ince Church of England Primary and The Forwards Together Partnership of Teaching Schools. An external advisor is provided by the local authority to support the governing body with the headteacher's performance management.

The findings and recommendations from the review of governance were reported to the Chair of the Governing Body. Subsequently, a draft action plan will be considered at the full governing body meeting later this month. Governors completed a skills audit and established their training needs to inform their future development. The local authority provides support for governors' training through the director's briefing for Chairs of governing bodies, online training and a clerking service. The governing body's improvement and monitoring committee has been strengthened by the addition of the local authority's school improvement officer, a representative from the diocese and an external monitoring officer. The governing body has allocated one of its members to take an overview of the impact of the pupil premium funding on improving the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils. The associate headteacher from Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School will report to the governors, following the review of the pupil premium spending, as part of a planned programme to ensure governors receive better information from the school.

The school's response has been immediate and positive. The executive headteacher quickly contacted parents to share the inspection report and the school's response, and a number of opportunities for parents to raise their concerns, such as surgeries,

drop-ins, and formal and informal meetings, took place. The response from parents indicates they agree with the direction the school is taking. The school continues to keep parents informed of the progress being made by the school and the pupils.

Staff have moderated pupils' work, within the school and with other schools, to improve their assessment skills and confidence regarding the attainment of pupils. As a result, teachers' planning has improved. They tightly focus on targeting gaps in individual pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding to improve pupils' progress. Staff training has focused on improving grammar skills and mathematics and pupils are clear about this focus in class. Pupils are enthused by the new 'times-table' wristbands and the mental mathematics that are used to challenge and engage them. Behaviour charts are consistently displayed in all classrooms and the new motto, 'Proud of our children, proud of our school, proud of our faith' is used to motivate pupils to help others and to make positive choices about their behaviour and attitude to learning. Pupils have responded positively to the changes in school.

Staff morale is high, and staff are working more consistently, as a result of focused staff development. Staff attendance has improved, which shows good progress against the target set in the action plan. A wider range of evidence, closely linked to the progress pupils are making with their learning, is being used to inform the judgement of the quality of teaching. As a result, teachers have a sharper focus on their own responsibility for professional development. Senior and middle leaders have been empowered to make decisions and be more responsible and accountable. They are responding positively to the challenge.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children and Families for Wigan and the Archdiocese of Liverpool. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Christina McIntosh
Her Majesty's Inspector