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11 November 2014

Mrs Caroline Grundy  
Headteacher  
St Gregory's RC Primary School  
Preston Street  
Farnworth  
Bolton  
Lancashire  
BL4 8AJ

Dear Mrs Grundy

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Gregory's RC Primary School, Farnworth, Bolton**

Following my visit to your school on 10 November 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 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:

- sharpen the action plan so that leaders can evaluate the impact of all actions on raising standards
- ensure all pupils in mathematics, including the most able, are systematically challenged to apply their learning by solving mathematical problems
- increase the pace at which governance is improved
- ensure governors have a clear understanding of the expected impact of pupil premium money spending so that they are able to hold leaders to account about the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with you, the acting deputy headteacher, a teacher, four pupils, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a national leader of education to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan, along with a range of other documentation provided by the school, was evaluated. I read minutes of governing body meetings held since the inspection. I also gave consideration to the views of 14 parents, 12 of which were received via Parent View.

## **Context**

The Year 1 teacher has been appointed as temporary acting deputy headteacher. An experienced teacher has been employed on a temporary basis to fill the gap created by the appointment of the acting deputy headteacher. A newly qualified teacher has been employed to provide additional teaching support in Key Stage 2. An additional governor has been appointed to the governing body.

## **Main findings**

The acting headteacher, with the support of other leaders and governors, has quite rightly focussed on improving the quality of teaching in order to raise standards across the school and also to improve pupils' behaviour. The well thought out school improvement plan identifies appropriate actions to address the main areas for improvement. However, the plan does not give clear enough measures of success and therefore leaders are not able to measure effectively enough whether they are on track or whether their actions are making any difference.

Leaders have introduced a rigorous system to monitor the quality of teaching. Since the inspection, the acting headteacher has ensured that all teachers have received feedback on how to improve their teaching. The school's own records, which have been verified by the local authority and a national leader of education, show that there has been an improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. However, scrutiny of pupils' work books shows that inconsistencies remain in the quality teachers' marking because the recently introduced whole school marking policy has not been applied consistently well.

Pupils' progress in writing is beginning to show signs of acceleration; they respond quickly to comments made in their work books by teachers. Evidence in pupils' work books shows that pupils improve their work when teachers challenge them by setting additional tasks. For example, one pupil improved his work by adding an adverb to the beginning of a sentence in order to make it more interesting for the reader. However, in mathematics a small number of teachers miss opportunities to accelerate the progress of the most able pupils because they do not set additional questions which challenge pupils to think more deeply and extend their learning.

Leaders have begun to use an online tracking system to enable them to identify more accurately any gaps in pupils' learning. Additional interventions, designed to boost pupil's rate of progress and fill any gaps in their learning, have been used effectively to ensure targeted support for individuals and groups of pupils. For example, a small group of boys was identified as underperforming in their writing. Following an intervention which was tailored specifically to the needs of these pupils, improvements could be seen in the quality of their writing.

The behaviour of pupils across the school has improved rapidly since the inspection. Leaders have introduced a new behaviour policy along with new systems to support teachers to improve the effectiveness of their behaviour management strategies. All the pupils spoken with knew the school rules and said that, although a very small number of pupils still choose to ignore rules, behaviour has improved since the inspection and their learning is very rarely disrupted. As a result of this collective approach to behaviour management, pupils settle quickly at the start of lessons and complete more work than they did before the previous inspection.

Governors are becoming increasingly effective in supporting the school to improve. Minutes of meetings since the inspection show that governors have rationalised the governing body committee structure so that they can focus on the key areas for improvement. While governors are more rigorous in their questioning of leaders about underperformance in many areas across the school, their understanding of the effectiveness of pupil premium spending remains poor. Leaders' plans do not show what the expected impact of the spending of pupil premium money is on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, governors do not hold leaders to account for the progress of disadvantaged pupils.

A recent external review of governance has been effective in identifying how the governors can ensure the long term effectiveness of the governing body. However, governors plan to make further changes to the structure of the governing body. It is therefore too early to judge the full impact of the review of governance.

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**

Leaders have made effective use of the support offered by the local authority and the diocese, especially in recruiting an experienced national leader of education along with a specialist leader of education. The acting headteacher, along with the national leader of education and local authority school improvement officer, has acted swiftly to undertake a review of learning and teaching. This has ensured that teachers know what they need to do to improve their teaching. Consequently, the quality of pupils' learning, particularly in writing, is beginning to show signs of improvement. Leaders have established links with an outstanding school in order to allow teachers to observe and share good practice; it is too early to judge the impact of this action on progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Drew Crawshaw

**Her Majesty's Inspector**