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9 February 2015

Mr Dominic Mulcahy  
Associate Headteacher  
St Cuthbert's RC Primary School  
Heyscroft Road  
Withington  
Manchester  
M20 4UZ

Dear Mr Mulcahy

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Cuthbert's RC Primary School, Manchester**

Following my visit to your school on 6 February 2015, 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.

This was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 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.

#### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher, the senior leadership and management team, the Chair and five members of the Governing Body, five parents and representatives of the local authority and diocese. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection and monitoring visit. I observed lessons and spoke to pupils. I also examined a range of documentation and evaluated the school improvement plan.

#### **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit, the headteacher has been unwell but is now making a phased return to school. The deputy headteacher has resigned. In the meantime,

you and the acting deputy headteacher have run the school, with the support of a newly established senior leadership and management team. Three members of staff have left the school and three new appointments have been made to replace them.

The governing body has been reconstituted and a new chair and vice chair have been appointed, supported by an external adviser. There have also been changes in membership of the governing body and in the structure of governors' committees.

## **Main findings**

Since the last monitoring visit, you and the acting deputy headteacher have instigated a number of crucial changes to the school which will provide a firm basis for further development by the headteacher when he returns to work full time. In this you have been assisted by senior leaders who have the dedication and determination to make St Cuthbert's a good school

After three revisions, the school improvement plan is now fit for purpose. It gives a clear indication of the standards that you expect seven and 11 year old pupils to reach by July 2015. These are generally in line with the national averages for last year. You recognise that achieving them will require a considerable improvement on the school's past performance and have established milestones that will have to be reached at the end of each term if this is to be ensured.

Your concerns about the accuracy of information have led to a detailed review of all the data for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. The assessment information collected since the beginning of this term will be moderated and used to review the current targets and make them more demanding. The data for the Early Years had already been moderated by the local authority and therefore were more secure. Your tracking information shows that, against those targets, children are making better than expected progress. Therefore, you are now planning to raise the targets so that they are in line with last year's national averages. One of the reasons for the increased progress in the early years is the work that has been done by the early years leader, the pupil premium champion and an external drama group to provide additional support to specific pupils whose communication and language skills are underdeveloped.

With the support of an external consultant, the leader for English has introduced a revised literacy programme that places a greater focus on developing pupils' command of grammar. You have appointed a new leader for mathematics, as well as an additional part-time teacher of the subject, in order to improve provision in this area. Every pupil in Year 6 now attends twice-weekly booster classes in English and mathematics and the highest performing pupils have also worked with staff from the local secondary school. It is clear, therefore, that considerable progress has been made in raising the attainment, progress and aspirations of pupils.

Since my first monitoring visit, you and your colleagues have arranged a well-attended listening session for parents, to enable them to raise any concerns about the school and for you to share with them your plans for the future. This led to the establishment of 'Parents Voice', on which every year group is represented. The five parents whom I met spoke very enthusiastically about the changes that have occurred since the previous monitoring visit, emphasising how positive and 'energised' they now find the staff. This was borne out by the enthusiasm of the staff whom I met.

Since the middle of last term, you have established two Year 5 and two Year 6 classes, so that you can provide more targeted teaching in smaller classes. This has proved popular with parents, pupils and staff.

Every teacher has been observed twice by the senior leaders and external consultants. Your data show that the quality of teaching is improving but is still inconsistent. Teachers have received detailed feedback on how they can improve further. To support this, visits have been arranged for them to observe good or outstanding practice in other schools.

Since the last visit, governance has improved considerably. Under the strong leadership of the new Chair, the governors have conducted a review of their own skills and identified the areas where they need further training and support. Additional, relevant expertise has been enlisted through the new appointments to the governing body. The governors have been actively involved in instigating and supporting the changes made since my last visit. They have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to ensure that the improvements made to date are sustained and developed further.

I will revisit the school next term and, where necessary, Ofsted will provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The school has established close working relationships with the diocesan representative, and the school improvement and quality assurance partners from the local authority. They have provided focused and timely support which you are using to good effect.

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

Yours sincerely

Aelwyn Pugh

**Her Majesty's Inspector**