

Tribal
Kings Orchard
1 Queens Street
Bristol, BS2 0HQ

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 311 5307
Email: rachel.evans@tribalgroup.com



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Mr Gerald Davis
The Headteacher
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Henley-on-Thames
Greys Hill
Henley-on-Thames
Oxfordshire
RG9 1SL

Dear Mr Davis

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Henley-on-Thames

Following my visit to your school on 3 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.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 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 create a single improvement plan which:

- includes measurable targets for pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics, including specific targets for any under-achieving groups
- relates to each of the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report, with details about actions to be taken, responsibilities and timescales
- states clearly how governors will check and measure the success of action taken by leaders and staff, by looking for improvements in pupils' learning
- shows how training and external support will support rapid and sustained improvement in each area.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you to discuss action taken since the last inspection. We visited all the classrooms to see evidence of the improvements you have already instigated. I met with the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, and with a representative of the local authority. I evaluated the school's improvement plans and considered a range of other documentation. This included local authority reports, information about pupils' progress and attendance, the school's records of checks on teaching, and information about staff training and the management of teachers' performance.

Context

Since the inspection, an established teacher has been promoted to the new role of Key Stage 2 leader.

Main findings

You acted promptly after the inspection to launch urgent improvement in the areas identified in the report. You immediately enhanced the teaching about reading which junior pupils receive, and introduced a clear policy for the whole school, to support improved pupils' behaviour during lessons.

To raise teachers' expectations, you devised appropriate targets for the minimum progress you expect pupils to make each year. You also introduced a clear policy to support improvements in pupils' presentation of all their work, including valuable expectations for the way teachers should set a good example.

At the same time you outlined clearly for teachers your expectations for their performance in relation to experience and salary level. You also established a sensible, annual schedule of activities to check teaching, the progress pupils make and the quality of their work, and for your reports to governors.

In addition, you set out clear plans to develop the skills and role of subject leaders and a programme of relevant training for all staff, including teaching assistants.

However, much of this improvement is set out in numerous individual documents, separate from the main "school improvement plan". This leaves the main plan incomplete, undermining a well-coordinated approach to all the areas identified for improvement. The main plan also lacks much of the detail needed about precise actions to be taken, responsibilities, the support and training that will be provided and how governors will check and measure success.

The targets you have set for pupils' progress do not feature well enough in any of the school's improvement plans as the key measure of success. Also, while you have correctly identified groups of pupils who are underachieving in different subjects, specific targets and plans relevant to these concerns have not yet been developed.

Governors are undertaking relevant training and you are readily responding to their new requests for information. Sensibly, an external review of governance is planned to tie in with the reconstitution of the governing body, and after the current recruitment of new governors.

External Support

The local authority is providing wide-ranging and targeted support at no charge to the school. This includes the valuable expertise of an experienced headteacher in the role of "school improvement leader", the helpful advice and guidance of early years specialists and useful training for governors. The Diocese of Birmingham has contributed well to the headteacher's induction. The headteacher has secured supportive links with the Oxford Schools Teaching Alliance to provide additional opportunities for staff training. The headteacher's openness to working with others is a strength.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Siân Thornton
Her Majesty's Inspector