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24 February 2015

Miss Kerry O'Sullivan  
Headteacher  
St Clare's Catholic Primary School  
Garmoyle Close  
Wavertree  
Liverpool  
Merseyside  
L15 0DW

Dear Miss O'Sullivan

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Clare's Catholic Primary School, Liverpool**

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to be judged as good at the next section 5 inspection. They should take immediate action to:

- Improve pupils' ability to use phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) to read and spell words.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, make sure teachers' assessment of children's attainment and progress is accurate and increase the proportion of children attaining the level of development for their age.
- Quickly improve the impact teaching has on pupils' progress particularly in mathematics and in writing.
- Make sure leaders' checks on the quality of teaching are more diagnostic, and are specific to each subject. Make better use of the information they have found to improve the quality of teaching.
- Formalise and share school documentation more widely so that the school can access support, training and guidance from the local authority.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you and with a group of five teachers who lead subjects. I also met with a representative of the local authority and with two members of the governing body. I looked through some examples of middle leaders' checks on the quality of teaching. I visited every year group with you to look at the quality of teaching.

## **Main findings**

The assessment of the younger children's skills and levels of development on entry into school is unreliable. For example, around a half of pupils were identified in the Nursery class as having a significant developmental delay in their speech and communication. Yet children were able to follow and join in singing songs and rhymes, could identify today's weather and explain what clothes they would need to keep warm when they are outside. They followed the teacher's instructions with ease and joined in the fun activities planned for them, chatting to their friends. Children's attainment by the end of the Reception Year increased slightly in 2014; however, only just over a third of children attained a good level of development which is significantly below the national average. The school should commission a detailed review of assessment, teaching and learning in the Nursery and Reception classes.

Pupils are taught daily how to use phonics to read words, sentences and books. The teaching, however, has not been effective. Only two thirds of the Year 1 pupils in 2014 could read at the level expected for their age and in particular, the White British pupils attained well below other children nationally. Senior leaders have not accurately identified the reasons behind the low attainment in reading in Year 1 and so should therefore work closely with the local authority to identify why the system of teaching phonics is not working well enough and quickly improve the quality of teaching.

Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has increased by the end of Year 2 in each of the last three years. This, in part, is because of high quality teaching in Year 2 which has enabled pupils to catch up to where they should be for their age. Teaching is not good enough to speed up pupils' achievement across the school particularly in writing and in mathematics. In 2014 pupils' progress was slow in Years 3 – 6 and they did not attain the levels expected for their age.

On my brief visits to classes:

- Teaching assistants were not always deployed well enough, meaning they were sitting silently listening to the teacher and having no impact on pupils' learning or on assessment. However, in some classes the assistants were highly active, asked good quality questions to help pupils to think and made a good contribution to pupils' progress. Senior leaders know of the weaker practice, have put training in place but significant weaknesses remain.

- Most teachers monitored pupils' learning well during lessons and gave helpful feedback and advice to individuals and to groups of pupils. However in some classes the teachers did not correct glaring mistakes which allowed pupils to think their spelling and writing was correct.
- In most English lessons, during my visit, all pupils completed the same work and had the same text. This meant for example, some pupils could not read the text at all because it was well above their reading ability and it was too easy and unchallenging for the most able pupils. Some of the writing activities are very low level so pupils only have to write a word or a phrase when they are capable of writing fluid complex sentences.

The teachers who lead subjects have not identified well enough, in their checks on teachers' work, why pupils' progress is slow or what aspects of teaching need to be improved. The checks are too general and not diagnostic enough. They are not related directly to good practice in each subject, they do not mention important aspects of teaching or teaching approaches such as questioning and the quality of activities. Instead they focus too much on unimportant peripheral aspects such as working walls and if a learning objective is shared or underlined in books. There is not enough focus on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress. The headteacher no longer formalises lesson observations to monitor the performance of teachers or to follow up previously identified issues. The whole system of monitoring the quality of teaching needs to be improved quickly so that it diagnoses clearly aspects of teaching that should be improved. The headteacher has established, however, a good system to identify the impact of teaching over time by looking at data, pupils' work, dropping into lessons and talking with staff.

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 school has accessed support from an external consultant and has strengthened the knowledge of the governing body by recruiting an ex-headteacher. The local authority has not had the formalised information it needs to be able to guide the school to access all of the available support. The school has not engaged as fully as it might with HMI to access guidance and support.

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

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**