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27 February 2015

Mr Matt Byrne  
Headteacher  
Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School  
Poulsom Drive  
Bootle  
Merseyside  
L30 2NR

Dear Mr Byrne

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School, Sefton**

Following my visit to your school on 26 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:

- Sharpen the descriptions of the expected outcomes of actions in the school's action plan so that governors can more easily check that the plan is working throughout the year.
- Develop further teachers' use of displays and investigations across the school to extend the opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their new knowledge and skills.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, four representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school

action plan and other documents relating to school improvement were evaluated. The inspector accompanied the headteacher on visits to all classes to see the school at work and look at the impact of leaders' actions.

## **Context**

There have been no significant changes to staffing or pupil numbers since the last inspection.

## **Main findings**

Initially senior leaders and governors were slow to start implementing change to improve the school but this has been addressed and the school is now moving forward at a more rapid pace.

The governors recognise they must check that actions are not only been taken but that they are also having the desired impact on the outcomes for pupils. Governors have established a monitoring committee who meet frequently, and now more rigorously challenge leaders and evaluate the effectiveness of their actions.

The action plan created by senior leaders is focused on addressing the key issues identified at the last inspection and contains appropriate actions. It must, however, be improved further to sharpen the clarity of the expected outcomes of these actions so that governors can more easily check it is working throughout the year.

Leaders have set and shared their minimum expectations of what should be in teachers' planning; this is improving how teachers set work for pupils that more closely meets the needs of the different abilities in each class.

Leaders' review and re-launch of the school's marking scheme allowed them to reinforce the importance of good quality guidance and the need for appropriate opportunities for pupils to improve their work. The sharper focus on improvement is resulting in pupils making better progress; this is shown in the work in their books. The school's own assessment data indicate that pupils are making progress as a faster rate.

The development of an improved mathematics calculation policy, with support of the local authority, is leading to more consistent teaching of basic mathematical skills, though it is too soon to see the impact of this work on pupils' standards of attainment.

Some teachers have been given opportunities to see good practice in other schools and learn from this. In Key Stage 1 and in the early years, visits to other schools have led to teachers amending how they organise their classrooms and improve their planning to provide more challenge for pupils. Further visits to schools recommended by the local authority are planned for other staff.

Changes to how the curriculum is organised mean that links between subjects are better used to engage pupils and are resulting in better quality learning. This is particularly so for writing, where the use of other subjects to develop literacy skills give clearer purpose to writing tasks and lead to some high quality products such as is seen in the recent themed project around 'The stickman'.

Pupils were excited to share their new topics with the inspector, including the launch of a space-focused theme in Year 5. This was launched using a giant inflatable planetarium and resulted in a palpable buzz of learning going on in the classes concerned. Teachers must now, however, capitalise on this new energy for learning by improving how displays and investigation activities give more opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their skills.

Leaders' actions to improve the school's environment are moving at pace. New fencing and access control mean that the school is a much safer place to study and work in. The development of specific learning spaces for some year groups, including the early years, is resulting in better opportunities for pupils to learn outdoors.

Middle leadership is beginning to improve because senior leaders draw effectively on the support and expertise of local authority consultants and school-to-school support from the school led by the National Leader of Education whose support has been brokered by the local authority. This is providing appropriate training for subject leaders and opportunities for them to see good practice.

### **External support**

Leaders are being held to account by the local authority through an increased level of monitoring which means that the local authority has an accurate understanding of what is working and what needs to be improved further. The school engages well with this support and challenge as well as that offered by other local support schools.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Sefton and the Director of Education for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Liverpool.

Yours sincerely

John Nixon

**Her Majesty's Inspector**