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Mrs Kristy Davis
Headteacher
Saint Mary RC Primary School
East Row
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London
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Dear Mrs Davis

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Saint Mary RC Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 4 March 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:

- provide clear and measurable indicators of success in the action plan so that progress toward achieving goals can be measured accurately
- ensure that processes for evaluation are focussed on the impact of actions
- ensure that robust quality assurance processes are in place so that leaders and governors have an accurate view of the improvements being made.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders and members of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also held separate telephone conversations with representatives from the local authority and the diocese. I evaluated the school action plan. I also looked at a range of other documentation and scrutinised a sample of pupils' work.

Context

Since the last inspection, there have been some changes to staffing. Two support staff have left and the school is currently recruiting a new deputy headteacher for the autumn term. A new assistant headteacher with responsibility for 'Additional Provisions & Intervention' has been appointed. This post commenced in December 2014 and includes responsibility for more-able pupils.

Main findings

Since the last inspection leaders and governors have been proactive and positive in their approach to improving the school. The headteacher, together with the leadership team, you have updated and refined the way in which many things are done. There is a clear focus on the development of staff and greater consistency of practice across the school. Staff welcome the recent changes and are clear of your expectations. It was clear from the monitoring visit that the culture change for improvement reported by staff is resulting in a sense of common purpose in the school.

Your action plan details a range of ways to address the areas for development identified in the last inspection. The plan includes 'milestones' to be achieved throughout the year. Some of these are qualitative rather than quantitative. Clear targets for improvement are available in other documents but the action plan does not reference them. This makes evaluating the rate of progress toward set goals more difficult.

The document also includes a section on half-termly evaluation and review. Some of these have been too descriptive and in some cases inaccurate.

Governors offer strong support and challenge to the school. They carry out regular visits to the school and are astute in their observations both in and out of the classroom. They have a clear understanding of what needs to improve and their role in reviewing the action plan. They acknowledge that training is required for some governors on aspects of data and this has been organised.

A more consistent approach to reading across the school has been implemented and this is starting to have a positive impact. For example, the introduction of reading journals has been received well by pupils and parents. There are also more opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of comprehension.

Improved tracking identifies underperformance at an earlier stage and targeted and structured support is put in place quickly. Subject leaders monitor pupils' progress on a regular basis. The accuracy of the assessments is secured through moderation between classes and with a number of other schools.

Teachers and leaders discuss and share examples of effective marking on a regular basis. Training on providing effective feedback has helped to refine the school's approach to this area. Scrutiny of school documentation indicate staff are providing more effective verbal feedback during lessons. Pupils are also being provided with dedicated time during lessons to respond to feedback. However, this is not yet consistent in all year groups.

Staff are aware of the need for increased challenge for the more able pupils. The newly-appointed assistant headteacher has been successful in raising staff awareness of the need for increased challenge for the more able pupils. Scrutiny of pupils' books shows that this is evident in tasks set but these do not always serve to extend and deepen the learning of the more able. However, as these initiatives have only recently been introduced, the impact on rates or trends in achievement for this group have yet to be proven.

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 commissioned the support of two consultants and is also supported by the local authority and the diocese. The consultants have worked closely with the school on specific areas for improvement and this is having an impact on improving the skills of teachers and leaders. Through these and other actions the school has formed a sizeable network of schools that it can utilise for support.

Recently, the local authority brokered a link with a local primary school graded as 'outstanding'. The local authority and the diocese have both increased their support since the last inspection. They have worked together and with the school to develop the 'School Improvement Board'. This group comprises representatives from the governing body, the local authority and the diocese. Together they meet every half-term to hold leaders to account for the progress of the action plan. Detailed records show the high-level of challenge at these meetings.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Kensington and Chelsea and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Westminster.

Yours sincerely

Sai Patel
Her Majesty's Inspector