

11 March 2015

Mr Peter Spillane
Headteacher
St Columba's Catholic Primary School
Tong Street
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West Yorkshire
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Dear Mr Spillane

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Columba's Catholic Primary School, Bradford

Following my visit to your school on 10 March 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the 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 October 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:

- ensure leaders focus on evaluating the impact their actions are having, making sure they triangulate their findings with other evidence focusing on the progress pupils are making
- review the action plan to ensure it clearly sets out:
 - who is responsible for leading improvements
 - appropriate time scales
 - what success will look like at different points on the journey to becoming 'good'
 - the expected outcomes and/or impact of leaders actions
 - expectations of achievement for pupils in all year groups.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and your senior leaders, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. You accompanied me on a tour of the school and we visited classrooms to look at pupils' learning during which a small selection of pupils' books was scrutinised to look at improvements in handwriting. I looked at a range of documents, including records of the school's monitoring activities, data on pupils' achievement and minutes of governing body meetings.

Context

Since the inspection, one new teacher has joined the school and the leader of the early years has begun a period of maternity leave. This leadership role is being covered by another early years teacher.

Main findings

Although disappointed, leaders and governors broadly agree that the judgement of the last inspection was a fair one. They recognise that the points for improvement were helpful and have begun to address them. Leaders have undertaken a range of monitoring activities such as scrutiny of pupils' work, meetings to discuss pupils' progress and observations of lessons. However, the extent to which leaders are focusing on the difference their actions are having needs developing. For example, when undertaking scrutiny of pupils' work leaders have looked to see whether there is evidence of different levels of work in lessons and pupils' work, however, they have not evaluated whether this is making enough difference to pupils' progress.

The school has moved quickly to address aspects of handwriting identified in the report. A brief scrutiny of pupils' books during a tour of the school showed clear improvement in the presentation of pupils' work and the maturity of their handwriting. One of the reasons behind this improvement is the clear focus on what successful outcomes should look like which was shared with staff. However, this approach has not spread to all aspects in the school's 'post Ofsted plan'. More commonly, the plan does not articulate clearly what success will look like on the journey to good and the measures and milestones that enable leaders to be held to account are not clear enough.

Leaders have worked with the support of the local authority to analyse their data and identify gaps in pupils' achievement across the school. Minutes from governors' meetings show they are aware of the school's data and ask challenging questions. However, the data they received about pupils' progress is often averaged for all pupils in a year group, this hampers their ability to challenge the progress of groups of pupils, particularly those who may be under achieving.

Support from a partnership school, St Joseph's Bingley, has included joint observations with leaders and visits for teachers to observe good practice. This has resulted in some helpful initiatives to improve the reading of a targeted group of pupils which is beginning to help them catch up more quickly.

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

Support from the local authority has enabled leaders to identify gaps in pupils' achievement and focus their actions more precisely. Work with a St Joseph's Bingley has enabled leaders to support a targeted group of readers to accelerate their progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Adrian Guy

Her Majesty's Inspector