

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancs Investment
Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 0300 123 1231

Text Phone: 0161 6188524

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566857

Direct F 01695 729320

Direct email: jkinsman@cfbt.com



20 April 2015

Miss Sarah Watson
Associate Headteacher
St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School
Tong Lane
Bacup
Lancashire
OL13 9LJ

Dear Miss Watson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Bacup, Lancashire

Following my visit to your school on 17 April 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 March 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 assessments of what pupils have achieved are made more secure by using a range of evidence, for example across different subjects.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, two members of your leadership team, four members of the governing body and two representatives of the local authority. I also held telephone discussions with the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the Catholic Diocese of Salford. We discussed the actions taken since the section 5 inspection of March 2014 and the monitoring

inspection undertaken by Shirley Gornall HMI in June 2014. I toured the school with you and scrutinised a range of documentation and very small sample of pupils' work.

Context

You took up your post of associate headteacher in September 2014. You will continue in this role until the end of August 2015. Governors, the diocese and the local authority will all be involved in the selection process for a substantive headteacher. Interviews for this post are scheduled for the end of April 2015.

Elsewhere in the school, there have been a number of changes. The Year 5/6 teacher has been appointed to the post of assistant headteacher in the school. A learning mentor has been appointed. Furthermore, one teacher in the Reception class is working on supply for the summer term and the Year 4/5 class teacher has been seconded for two terms: both these teachers started on the Monday before this monitoring inspection. The former Reception class teacher left at the end of the spring term in 2015 to take up a post in another school.

Main findings

Along with your leaders, governors and the local authority, you have built successfully on the initial improvements established by your predecessors and reported by my colleague Shirley Gornall HMI in June 2014. Your sustained presence and work in the school has had a most positive stabilising effect. Greater levels of consistency are now evident, meaning staff and pupils understand the expectations of them. Staff expect more of pupils in terms of their work and effort. Pupils are clear about the way they should behave. You have also established with leaders clear processes to record improvements in the quality of teaching and in pupils' achievement. The impact of this work is seen in the calm, orderly environment in which pupils work and in the progress pupils are making. Following disappointing results in 2014, all current pupils in Year 6, including those who are disadvantaged, are on course to make progress in reading and writing in line with national expectations. This is confirmed by the data held by your leaders and work seen in pupils' books. We agreed, though, in terms of pupils' progress in writing in particular, assessments of what pupils have achieved would be made more secure by using a range of evidence, for example across different subjects. The expectation needs to be embedded that if pupils are writing at a higher level in their English books, they should be doing so across other subjects too.

The stability you have brought to the school has also benefited governors. Following an external review of governance, members are more keenly focused on the successes of the school and what needs to be improved. They know the school increasingly well and, as minutes of meetings show, ask challenging questions. They are aided in their understanding by your clear, informative reports. They are also supported in their role by being linked to different subject leaders. This enables them to get the picture of how well pupils are doing across the curriculum. The

diocese plans to offer support for governance to strengthen their role further. The monitoring records undertaken by your leaders, of work in books and teachers' planning for example, give such leaders an increasingly accurate view of strengths and what needs to be improved. We agreed the planned local authority work to focus on articulating the learning made by pupils will sharpen further leaders' overview of the areas for which they are responsible.

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

External support

The strong levels of support and challenge provided by the local authority have been appreciated by both yourself and the diocese. Its representatives know the school very well and the addition of staff to ensure stability has been most welcome. The local authority's programme of training and support, in teaching and learning and literacy for example, has assisted you in gaining greater levels of consistency of teaching quality and pupil progress.

You are also drawing on support from other schools, including to provide mentoring support for the newly qualified teacher and to begin to check the accuracy of assessments.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire and to the Catholic Diocese of Salford.

Yours sincerely

Mark Williams

Her Majesty's Inspector