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Mrs Maureen Hulme
Headteacher
St Charles' Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School
Norfolk Street
Hull
HU2 9AA

Dear Mrs Hulme

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Charles' Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, City of Kingston upon Hull

Following my visit to your school on 24 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in January 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

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 more detail in the action plan about how the school intends to raise expectations, and state explicitly what success would look like if all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve well
- ensure that all monitoring has a clear focus on raising pupils' achievement
- continue to develop the capacity of middle leaders to play a full part in the development of teaching across the school.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated a range of documentation including the post-Ofsted action plan, pupil premium review, and pupil progress data. I visited all classrooms with you, speaking to pupils about their learning and looked at pupils' work.

Context

At the time of this visit, two full-time temporary teachers were in post. A Key Stage 2 teacher who was absent at the time of the Section 5 inspection is still absent and a long term supply teacher is covering this post. A second Key Stage 2 class is also being taught by a temporary teacher. Additional part-time teachers have been recruited to boost teaching in upper Key Stage 2.

Main findings

A post-Ofsted action plan has been written to address areas for requiring improvement identified during the last inspection. The plan is focussed on improving the quality of teaching and ensuring that pupil premium funding is used to good effect but it does not identify exactly how the school intends to raise expectations of what pupils can achieve. Arrangements for checking the quality of teaching are not precise and so not all leaders are aware of their role in developing teaching. A recent external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding has helped leaders to identify priorities more clearly, and to increase the focus on improving rates of progress and standards for pupils. However, this focus on pupil outcomes is not included in the post-Ofsted action plan and as a result it is difficult for the school to measure when they have achieved their objectives. There is some evidence of the early impact of the school's work:

- You and your senior leaders have undertaken planning and work scrutinies, and have observed lessons alongside middle leaders, to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Issues common to all classes have been identified. These checks on the school's work have enabled senior leaders to identify where individual teachers need help, and targets have been set and recorded in teachers' 'improvement logs'. These logs provide a clear record of how leaders have asked teachers to work more effectively. Teachers are more robustly being held to account for the progress of pupils in their class. There are currently termly reviews of how well pupils are achieving and there are plans to increase the frequency of these meetings as a strategy to secure more rapid progress for all pupils. Leaders are aware of the need to continually check on the accuracy of data. Early indicators suggest that pupils are making more consistent progress.

- Teachers and teaching assistants have had many opportunities to develop their skills by working alongside consultants, or attending training courses. However, it is too soon to say what impact this has had on the quality of teaching. A new marking policy has recently been agreed and there is evidence in some books that pupils are beginning to respond to teachers' comments. There is still variation in the impact of marking on pupils' work and their learning.
- A revised handwriting policy has been put into place. As a result, some pupils are now able to reach higher levels in writing, but the application and impact of the policy has been inconsistent in Key Stage 2 because teachers are not insisting that all pupils use joined handwriting. A mathematics policy, explaining how calculation should be taught, has recently been agreed by teachers. The mathematics leader is supporting staff as they try to meet higher expectations for pupil progress in mathematics.
- Governors understand that the variability in the quality of teaching is leading to inconsistent progress by pupils. They are aware of the outcomes of the pupil premium review and are looking forward to establishing a relationship with a National Leader of Education and a support school. Not all governors are currently receiving pupil progress data as this is dealt with at the standards committee. This means that not all governors have the full picture of the schools' work, limiting their ability to challenge school leaders.
- The school is in the early stages of developing a partnership with Highlands Primary School, a National Support School, to further improve teaching at St. Charles. The headteacher of Highlands has undertaken the pupil premium review, but it has proved a slow process to secure funding to begin further work between the schools, and currently the partnership is not making a significant contribution to the school's improvement.

Although there is evidence of some impact of improvement the need for consistency in the quality of teaching, and a focus on the achievement of all pupils, remain priorities. You are aware of the challenges, particularly in relation to staffing issues, and the need to secure improvement if the school is to be good at its next section 5 inspection.

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 local authority has helped the school to develop a reading project, supported the evaluation of pupils' work, and brokered the partnership with Highlands Primary School. The school has taken part in moderation of pupils' work in mathematics, reading and writing with the local Catholic partnership of schools, further developing teachers' skills in assessment.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for City of Kingston upon Hull and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Middlesbrough.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Butcher

Her Majesty's Inspector