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13 May 2015

Mrs Carole Hogan  
Headteacher  
St Philip's Catholic Primary School  
Half Moon Lane  
Offerton  
Stockport  
Cheshire  
SK2 5LB

Dear Mrs Hogan

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Philip's Catholic Primary School, Stockport**

Following my visit to your school on 12 May 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 March 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. The school should take immediate action to:

- ensure that the post inspection action plan reflects the urgency required to improve the quality of teaching by bringing forward the start date of some key actions
- check the quality of teaching robustly so that leaders have an accurate view of what teaching looks like day in and day out in all classes. Use information gathered to tailor appropriate support for teachers who need it, challenge teachers to have higher expectations and hold teachers to account for the progress pupils are making.
- urgently ensure that the mathematics and English subject leaders are given support, training and guidance so that they can play a greater

role in improving the quality of teaching and learning within their subjects

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, mathematics and English subject leaders, a small group of pupils from Key Stage 2, four members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese. Documents were scrutinised including: the school development plan, records of your checks on teaching, records of how pupil premium funding is being spent and records of a visit to the school by a consultant. I also visited each classroom with you to speak to pupils, look at their books and observe their learning.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection the deputy headteacher has announced her retirement and the recruitment process for a replacement is underway. A new assistant headteacher has been appointed to join the school in September. An experienced teaching assistant has been re-deployed to work in the Early Years Foundation Stage class on a full-time basis.

## **Main findings**

You have high aspirations for all of the pupils in the school and are determined to take the necessary action required to lead the school on the challenging journey towards becoming good. You agree that the latest inspection judgements were fair and accurate and reflect your own evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. You have considered the inspection findings carefully and written a plan that plots a course towards improvement. While your plan correctly addresses the main areas for improvement, some key issues to improve the quality of teaching and to tackle underperformance are not scheduled to begin soon enough. As a result, the urgency required to get to grips with improving the quality of teaching is not sufficiently addressed or conveyed.

Your efforts to improve teaching are not yet fully effective because some teachers have not taken the findings of the most recent inspection seriously or do not fully appreciate the urgency with which improvements need to be made. For instance, your insistence in one class that pupils are given greater opportunities to write has not been acted upon. Consequently, pupils have had too few chances to develop their writing skills since March. In another class, your expectation that pupils books are marked regularly, in line with the school policy, has not been followed and during our observations in this class it was evident that at least one pupil's English book had not been marked for almost a term.

Middle leaders are keen to play their part in helping you to move the school forward. They have had an initial opportunity to begin to monitor the quality of teaching by

checking books, which has helped to give them a broad view of the strengths and weaknesses within mathematics and English. For instance, the need for pupils to deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts by applying their skills to problem solving activities. However, they have not yet had the opportunity or training to develop their role to a greater degree. As a consequence, they do not have the depth of understanding of what is required to improve the quality of teaching in their subjects and their action plans do not address the nuts and bolts of improvements required in enough detail.

Your own checks on the quality of teaching have not been fully effective. You undertake regular learning walks, drop-in lesson observations and more formal lesson observations of teaching which have enabled you to pinpoint some areas that require improvement. However, you have relied too heavily upon the judgements of an external educational consultant to undertake other checks, such as looking in pupils' books. As a consequence, you have not been fully aware of some of the shortcomings in the quality of teaching that were evident during my visit.

You have taken positive steps to improve the Early Years Foundation Stage provision. You have developed links with a local outstanding school which has enabled the sharing of good practice. The outdoor environment has also been remodelled and a range of new resources have been purchased. As a result the class teacher is now planning activities that enable children to develop their skills in a range of environments. You have also re-deployed an experienced teaching assistant to work within the class. Her outdoor education skills have enabled her to support the planning of exciting and imaginative activities for the children such as the planting of seeds, linked to the story of Jack and the Beanstalk that we observed during my visit.

Governors have the utmost confidence in you to bring about positive change in the school. They have taken the opportunity of reconstitution to recruit a number of governors that bring a range of diverse and important skills. They have been proactive in writing their own action plan that links closely with the post Ofsted action plan and will allow them to keep close checks on how successful planned actions are in delivering improvement. Their support of the appointment of an assistant headteacher from September, as well as the recruitment of a new deputy headteacher will help bring greater leadership capacity to support you in your role.

Pupils welcome the changes that you have already brought about. They speak with a sense of pride about how their handwriting is improving due to the new cursive style that they are being taught. They say that playtimes are much better now that there is more space to play in since the timetable has been changed. Furthermore, they report behaviour has improved greatly since you have introduced a 'zero tolerance' approach to the use of unkind language.

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 provided welcome and focussed support. It has funded an external consultant to support the development of marking and feedback and has delivered training and support to teachers. The local authority has also helped you to develop links with a local outstanding school. The local authority advisor has worked with you to support action planning. The diocese has also provided support to the school and has worked closely with the governing body to deliver training that has helped governors to develop their understanding of their role.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Stockport and as below.

Yours sincerely

Martin Bell

## Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form  
[hns.efa@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:hns.efa@education.gsi.gov.uk)
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- For academies [[CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk)]
- For free schools, UTCs and studio schools [[open.FREESCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:open.FREESCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk)]
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school is a non-maintained special school  
[hns.efa@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:hns.efa@education.gsi.gov.uk)
- Department for Education [if the school is a non-maintained special school]  
[registration.enquiries@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:registration.enquiries@education.gsi.gov.uk)