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Mr Darren Mussell
Headteacher
St Anne's and St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Accrington
Sandy Lane
Accrington
Lancashire
BB5 2AN

Dear Mr Mussell

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Anne's and St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Accrington, Lancashire

Following my visit to your school on 20 May 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 January 2015. 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 that targets set for pupils' progress are high enough, in particular for the most able
- embed the new marking system, ensuring that feedback to pupils is specific and enables them to understand how to improve
- further develop the effectiveness of middle leaders to ensure that teaching and learning in all subject areas is consistently well led and supported.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, your deputy headteacher, three governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, nine Year 5 pupils, a group of three subject leaders, three teaching assistants and a representative from the local authority's monitoring intervention team (MIT). I held telephone conversations with a local authority advisor and a representative of the Diocese. The focus of the meetings and telephone calls was to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. In addition, you accompanied me on a tour of the school and we visited a number of classes. I looked at samples of work from pupils in Years 2, 5 and 6. I looked at a range of documentation including senior leaders' current analysis of pupils' progress and documentation relating to the monitoring of teaching and learning. I evaluated the school's action plan.

Context

The previous headteacher retired at the end of April and you took up the post of headteacher at the beginning of May.

Main findings

Following the inspection, senior leaders, supported by the governing body, swiftly took action to ensure that an appropriate plan was put in place to tackle the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report. The plan is clear and detailed but you acknowledge that some of the targets for pupils' progress need to be higher, particularly for the more able. It is clear that significant attention has been paid by yourself and your predecessor to ensuring a smooth handover and no loss of time in the improvement journey.

The school is working closely with the local authority advisor and the monitoring intervention team and has put in place a range of approaches to improve the quality of teaching. The approaches include carefully identifying strengths and areas for development in teaching, providing feedback to teachers, training opportunities and visits to see outstanding practice, to help to tackle the areas for improvement. Training has included a focus on challenging the more able in mathematics and specific training for all staff, including teaching assistants, in marking. Leaders report that the training and support are beginning to impact positively in the classroom and this is evidenced by pupils' responses. In addition, in-school progress data for pupils at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 this year, show improvement when compared with the rate of progress at the same time last year.

A new policy on marking and feedback to pupils has been introduced and is being used in all year groups in school. The new approach is being used alongside 'fix-it' time at the beginning of the school day. During this time, pupils look at teachers' feedback in marking and make amendments to their work. Pupils spoken to commented that the new system is helping them to improve their work. A scrutiny of

work indicated that pupils are beginning to think more carefully about how to improve their work and are starting to respond to advice given by teachers. This is not yet consistent; although errors are highlighted by teachers, advice on how to improve the work is not clear.

Significant work is taking place to develop the effectiveness of subject leaders. Subject leaders are now becoming more actively involved in checking on the quality of teaching and learning within their area of responsibility. They now take part in learning walks, feedback to staff and looking at pupils' work and progress data. One subject leader spoken to commented that the role had 'changed dramatically' and that they have a better overall view of their subject area. As a result, subject leaders are becoming better placed to lead improvements in their areas.

Subject leaders meet with their link governor and share information so that governors have a clearer picture of progress in their subject area. Governors commented that they are using these meetings to challenge and ask questions about the impact on pupils' achievement of the actions taken.

All staff have been briefed on the expectations regarding the effective deployment of teaching assistants to support learning. As a result, the importance of teaching assistants being actively engaged at all times in supporting learning has been made clear. Observation of teaching assistants and individual feedback has taken place which is helping to reinforce developments. Teaching assistants spoken to commented that the new system of marking is helping them in their role of supporting learning, as they are able to more easily identify areas for improvement.

Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school and comment that since the inspection, they feel they are now looking more closely at specific issues. Their understanding has been helped by regular updates from the headteacher about the progress with specific elements of the action plan and the impact of the actions.

External support

The school is drawing on significant external support provided by the local authority advisor and by the monitoring intervention team. This support network is providing school staff with very valuable training, advice and individual support to help the school to improve the quality of teaching and the processes for middle leaders to follow. Teachers have taken part in moderation of pupils' work with a local cluster of schools. This has enabled teachers to check their judgements on levels of work and increased their confidence in this area. In addition, some teachers have visited another school to see outstanding practice in action. The impact of this work is yet to be evaluated.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Yarwood

Her Majesty's Inspector