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8 May 2015

Mrs Martina Staffa
Headteacher
Our Lady of Perpetual Succour Roman Catholic Primary School
Blackburn
Lancashire
BB2 3UG

Dear Mrs Staffa

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour Roman Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 8 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 taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take immediate action to:

- include detailed targets for achievement in the school action plan so that governors can keep a close check on the rate of improvement.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and your deputy headteacher. I also met with two representatives of the governing body and with an adviser from the local authority. I held a telephone conversation with an adviser from the diocese. I conducted a tour of the school, visiting each class and spoke informally to some pupils about their work. I scrutinised a range of documentation which included your school improvement plan and records of your checks on the quality of teaching.

Context

One teacher has left the school since the section 5 inspection. Two new parent governors have been appointed to the governing body.

Main findings

You have acted with great determination, building on the significant steps you had taken to improve the school prior to its last inspection. Indeed, you have used the inspection findings to galvanise staff and to refine the actions you take to improve teaching. You and your deputy headteacher keep a very close check on what goes on in the classroom. You provide teachers with detailed feedback on their lessons and on the learning you see in pupils' books. You then check back with them in following weeks, to ensure they are acting on your guidance. This is having a demonstrable impact on the quality of pupils' learning. It was evident at this inspection, for example, that teachers are selecting from a range of reading genres to stimulate pupils' writing styles. Pupils have increased opportunities to write extended pieces of work, including in their topic books, and to edit and improve their finished pieces.

You are drawing on the good teaching that exists in the school, and in other schools, to enable your staff to reflect upon and improve their practice. It is evident that all teachers are now prioritising more-able pupils in their planning. They are giving careful thought to how they can challenge these pupils to develop their thinking in mathematics and through their written work.

Your deputy headteacher has introduced a new 'behaviour for learning' project since the inspection. This is enabling pupils to understand how the quality of their engagement with their work affects the progress they make. For example, clear evidence was seen of pupils making significant improvements to the presentation of their writing. This in turn, had improved the accuracy of their spelling and the range of language styles they had used.

You have worked with your teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage to audit the outdoor provision for children in the reception class. This provided you with precise areas where improvements could be made; for example, in children's access to creative play resources. You have already conducted a follow-up check on the provision and can evidence clearly that children have more opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in all areas of learning, both inside and outside the classroom.

Governors have secured the support of a National Leader of Governance who is working with them to review their effectiveness. Governors know they still need further development and have planned for some additional training this term. Your school action plan is a helpful document that they can use to check that promised actions have been taken so that the rate of improvement does not slow down.

However, it does not, as yet, contain the detailed targets that you use to check on the progress of groups of pupils with your teachers. As such, governors are not yet able to check regularly if the actions you take to improve the school are effective.

External support

Both the diocese and the local authority are providing support and challenge to the school. The diocese is co-ordinating much of the support and training for governors. They have also established future opportunities for governors to go and observe meetings in other schools. The local authority expects you to make an account of how the school is improving each half term. It has provided you with an adviser who provides some external verification of the impact your actions are having on raising pupils' achievement. You have also been able to access good practice in other schools through local and diocesan networks. This is proving to be fruitful as it has raised teachers' expectations and provided them with new ideas that they have immediately used in their own classrooms.

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

Yours sincerely

Philippa Darley

Her Majesty's Inspector