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23 June 2015

Mrs Joanne Wilson
Headteacher
St Cuthbert's RC Primary School
Stratford Road
Hartlepool
County Durham
TS25 5AJ

Dear Mrs Wilson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Cuthbert's RC Primary School, Hartlepool

Following my visit to your school on 22 June 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 further action to:

- ensure the school's website contains all statutory information as outlined in The School Information (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012
- measure the impact of the extra help and support for pupils when they fall behind
- deploy teaching assistants more effectively so they have a greater impact on pupil progress.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, pupils from Year 2, Year 4 and Year 6, three governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) visited lessons, checked pupils' work in their mathematics workbooks, checked entries made by staff in children's learning journals and reviewed a range of documentation including pupil progress data and recent checks on teaching.

Context

Membership of the governing body has been reconstituted in accordance with the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012. The governing body has been strengthened by a new member with a background in education. Two new senior leadership positions have been created. The school roll has increased by seven pupils.

Main findings

The school's post-Ofsted action plan addresses each of the areas for improvement identified in the section 5 inspection report. However, pupil progress targets are not ambitious enough and actions to be undertaken are not always outlined clearly. In addition, leaders have not made it clear who is carrying out improvement actions, who is monitoring the actions have taken place and who is evaluating the impact of the actions. Furthermore, there are insufficient milestones in the plan to enable senior leaders, governors and the local authority to check accurately the impact of the school's work and the rate at which progress is happening.

The headteacher has taken effective action to remodel the senior leadership team and create phase leaders for the early years, Key Stage 1, lower Key Stage 2 and upper Key Stage 2. These leaders are beginning to take an integral part in school improvement. For example, leaders have checked mathematics workbooks, outlined the strengths and areas for development to teachers, delivered training and evaluated subsequent improvement.

Senior leaders have a more informed view of pupils' achievements because teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment are more accurate. However, senior leaders do not always measure the impact that extra help and support are having on pupil progress so that they can make informed decisions about the success of particular activities.

Senior leaders have taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching throughout the school. As a result, standards at the end of Key Stage 1, although still below the national average, are beginning to improve overall in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards are also beginning to improve for those pupils entitled

to support through the pupil premium funding in Key Stage 1. The school's data for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 indicates a similar trend of improvement.

The quality of teachers' marking and feedback, although not yet consistent throughout the school, is much improved. Pupils appreciate the comments written by teachers and value the time allocated to completing challenges in mathematics. The pupils told HMI that their work is now much harder in mathematics, they are learning at a faster rate and have more opportunities to use and apply their new knowledge and skills to solve mathematical problems.

Improvements in the early years are well-judged and timely. As a result, standards are improving; the proportion of children achieving a good level of development in the early years has increased from about half in 2014 to just under three quarters in 2015.

The external review of the school's use of the pupil premium has taken place and the subsequent report was received by the school on the day of HMI's monitoring visit. HMI will check the impact of the actions taken in response to this report in a future monitoring visit.

Ofsted will 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 was already aware of the areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection and had previously set up regular meetings to challenge and support the school. Officers have moderated and agreed the school's assessment data at the end of the early years, Key Stage 1, Year 4 (as part of a local authority pilot) and Key Stage 2. The local authority has also employed an external school improvement partner to work with senior leaders to establish systems to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. Although at an early stage, the impact of this work can be seen in action plans prepared by senior leaders.

The provision in the early years is much improved due to effective school-to-school support provided by staff from St John Vianney RC Primary School.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Hartlepool and the Director of Education for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.

Yours sincerely

Belita Scott

Her Majesty's Inspector