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1 December 2015

Mrs Claire Sierotko
Headteacher
St Anne's Catholic Primary School
Lightwood Road
Buxton
SK17 7AN

Dear Mrs Sierotko

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Anne's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 November 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 May 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 in order to become a good school. Leaders should take further action to:

- ensure that the action plan includes all the proposed steps you have decided to take, with milestones to check for improvement and clear ways to measure the success of each action
- ensure that teachers allow pupils to be moved on to more challenging work once it is clear that they can do the work that has been set for them.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your deputy headteacher, a group of pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan and undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work. I examined recent

planning from the leader of the early years. I also toured the school with both you and the deputy headteacher to see lessons taking place in different classes.

Context

There have been no significant changes since the inspection.

Main findings

The school has taken appropriate action since the inspection in respect of most of the areas for improvement identified in the report. Teachers are now ensuring that they give better advice to pupils when they mark their books. Pupils who I spoke to during my visit say this is helping them to understand what they need to do next in order to improve. Exercise books that I looked at show that teachers are developing pupils' grammar and punctuation skills more effectively. Pupils say that teachers also insist that they correct the spelling mistakes that they make. They also think that the new 'fix it' time that they are given in lessons is useful because it gives them an opportunity to address any errors before they go on to learn new things.

Pupils' work is neat and tidy. Pupils complete their work using joined handwriting in line with the new policy you have introduced. Pupils show a pride in their work and their work is both legible and easy to understand. However, though most adults are modelling the handwriting style appropriately when they mark pupils' books, a small minority of staff are not. You are aware that this may cause pupils to become confused when they are learning how to write. As a result, you are ensuring that this is addressed and that all staff model handwriting consistently. Pupils I spoke with at lunchtime and in the classrooms also say that, though most of the work they are given is challenging, some of it is too easy. A considerable number of those that I spoke with told me that, on occasion, they are ready for more difficult work but are not given this quickly enough.

Children in the early years are being given more help to develop their communication skills. Staff in the early years ensure that they now include opportunities for questioning in their lesson planning, along with key vocabulary to teach children, each day. Staff are also using the improved outdoor learning area to ensure that all children are engaged in learning. Children I saw there were making long lines and towers with large play bricks while staff taught them to judge which ones were shorter and either longer or taller. Pupils in all year groups are being helped to understand and use correct mathematical vocabulary when they work. For example, one Year 2 pupil had written, 'I can identify a pattern using number bonds' and another had noted, 'I can estimate and measure the length of items'.

You and your staff have agreed a new system of assessing pupils' progress now that National Curriculum levels have been abolished. Staff are still in the early stages of using this system, but are becoming more confident at using it. Your work to improve your communication with parents is also at an early stage. However,

teachers have begun to send out more information to parents about what their children are learning each term, and how they can support them at home. Governors are sending out their own newsletters, and you are planning to ensure that your school website is improved so that it contains a high level of up-to-date and useful information. Most of the parents I spoke with during my visit believe that communication from the school is improving.

Though you have taken a good deal of effective action to improve since the inspection, you and the governing body agree that the current action plans that you have drafted need to be reviewed and agreed by governors. This is because, in their current form, they do not include all the steps you are proposing to take, nor show clearly how you will measure how well those actions will work. In addition, not all areas of the current plan include milestones, so governors are unable to check success at different points. You have a meeting planned shortly with the local authority advisor to complete an effective action plan that will address all of these points, and you have agreed to send me a copy once it is written.

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 considerable support to the school, which you, senior leaders, staff and governors have found very valuable. Governors have been given training on how to check that pupils are making progress in their lessons. They have also been given support so that they feel more confident in their role and are able to challenge school leaders effectively. Local authority advisors have also supported leaders of English and mathematics to improve their effectiveness and have attended meetings on pupil progress to ensure that teachers' assessment is accurate. In addition, the local authority has brokered support with another school in Derbyshire to help the early years staff to observe a highly effective learning environment and to learn from the good practice seen there. The advisor is fully committed to ensuring that appropriate support from the local authority continues so that the school improves further.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall
Her Majesty's Inspector