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4 January 2016

Mrs Hayley Liddon  
Headteacher  
St Edward's Catholic Primary School  
New Road  
Sheerness  
Kent  
ME12 1BW

Dear Mrs Liddon

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

Following my visit to your school on 15 December 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 June 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. The school should take further action to:

- shorten and sharpen the school improvement plan, so that it has precise and challenging targets for improved outcomes for pupils
- continue to develop the work of middle leaders who are responsible for subjects.

**Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also held meetings with governors, and representatives of the local authority and archdiocese. With you, I visited all the classes, speaking with some pupils and looking at their

work. I observed the Reception class nativity play. I evaluated key documents, including the school improvement plan and school evaluations.

## **Context**

A new deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2015. Other than this, staffing has remained stable.

## **Main findings**

You continue to provide the purposeful leadership referred to in the June inspection report. The new deputy headteacher has quickly added further creativity, dynamism and rigour to your senior team. With the experience of the assistant headteacher, this team is tenaciously guiding the school forward. You know the needs of the pupils and community well. The roles of senior staff are efficiently organised and dovetailed together. The performance management of staff is now more effectively organised, after recent changes. With the business manager and governors, you provide the consistent and trustworthy direction that the school needs. One of the governors aptly described your work as providing the school with 'a heart, a hope and a vision'.

Rightly, one of your key purposes is to raise aspirations. You know that pupils can do much better than they have done in the past. When we visited classes together, it was clear that teaching and learning are improving. You have worked hard on this with the staff. More is expected of the pupils. For example, in one class, pupils enjoyed planning a Christmas party for younger pupils, applying mathematics usefully to make real decisions about the party budget. You have recently and thoughtfully reorganised the teaching of phonics (linking letters and sounds), which has been weak. You are providing wider opportunities for writing and reading for older pupils. You check carefully on the impact of these changes. So far, there are improvements to be seen.

Standards continue to rise in the Reception class. The activities I observed there were appropriately organised and planned by staff, based on suitable assessments of the children. In their classroom, and outdoors, children showed good levels of concentration on their various chosen activities. This was particularly noteworthy given that the children had just performed their excellent nativity play. This was well attended by parents and others. In the play, the children sang accurately and with very clear diction. They showed very evident respect to the Christmas story.

The school's Christian foundation contributes much to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The pastoral adviser does valuable work in assisting and guiding pupils when they particularly need this. The recent increase in the hours of the special educational needs coordinator has improved provision for the pupils she is supporting. Generally, pupils feel safe, secure and well cared for. Attendance rates are about average and show some improvement.

You check carefully on the progress made by all pupils in English and mathematics. You have good evidence that most are achieving better than they did previously. You have noted, however, that pupils entitled to the support of the pupil premium funding have not, overall, made as good a start as you had hoped this year. In part, you put this down to difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified staff. Nevertheless, you have made some sensible revisions to the provision for these pupils.

The senior leadership team is developing its work very well. Nevertheless, its members are all in new roles and are learning. This learning is helped by some very useful links with experienced senior staff in other schools. You evaluate the school honestly and accurately. The school improvement plan is a useful document, guiding improvement in key areas. However, it is over-long. It does not contain clear enough targets for what the pupils will know, or be able to understand or do, as a result of the actions in the plan. This makes it less easy to evaluate and to demonstrate clearly the school's newly raised aspirations for pupils.

Middle leaders, responsible for particular subjects, are also carrying out some useful tasks. However, their roles and the impact of their work require much further development. These leaders have produced plans for their subjects. As with the main school improvement plan, these need to be sharper in showing the expected outcomes for pupils.

Overall, the leadership from the senior team has set the right principles and started to build systems that you intend to be sustainable for the future. You are doing the right things to raise standards and to address the challenges that you know the school has. You need now to build further the quality and consistency of the work done within the systems and methods you have rightly put in place.

The governing body is committed and astute in its work. Its members have considerable expertise and experience. They challenge and support the school well. Rightly, they are considering how it might be possible to recruit a member from the Polish community, as pupils from this background represent about 15% of the school's population.

### **External support**

The local authority and archdiocese both support and monitor the school well. Correctly, they tailor and adjust their work to meet its changing needs. They have suitably reduced the amount of support they give as the school's own leadership continues to improve. Their work nevertheless remains very valuable.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Archdiocese of Southwark and the Director of Children's Services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**