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Mr Richard Sanderson
St Wulstan's and St Edmund's Catholic Primary School and Nursery
Poulton Road
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Dear Mr Sanderson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Wulstan's and St Edmund's Catholic Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 12 July 2016, 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 October 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in October 2015, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- improve the information provided for parents on the school's website to at least meet government requirements
- employ a qualified special educational needs coordinator or organise for a teacher to be trained in how to lead provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- raise pupils' attainment in mathematics in key stage 2.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders. I also met with the associate headteacher who will be taking over from you at the start of September. I met with two representatives of the local authority and with two members of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I looked through a range of documentation, including the school's improvement plan. With you and the deputy headteacher, I toured the school to observe pupils at work.

Context

You are moving to another school at the start of September 2016. The headteacher from Freckleton Church of England Primary School will take over until a new permanent headteacher can be appointed. There has been significant turbulence since the inspection because of staff absence.

Main findings

Improvements that were made prior to the previous inspection have continued. The school's assessment information, for example, shows a four-year increase in pupils' ability to use phonics in their reading and spelling. In the 2016 assessment, most pupils in Year 1 attained the expected level in phonics. (Phonics is a way of breaking down words into the different letters and sounds.)

The leaders and teachers have successfully made improvements to the accuracy and effectiveness of assessment in the early years. They have checked the accuracy of the assessments with other schools in the area. The deputy headteacher is a specialist in early years education and has used her expertise very well to lead changes to teaching. Teachers now plan lessons and activities, particularly in Reception, based on what children need to learn next. There has been a three-year increase in children's attainment by the end of Reception. Over three quarters of children attained a good level of development in 2016, although the children's achievement in reading, writing and number work was higher than it was in 2015. There is still some work to do in Nursery to make sure that all activities taking place away from adults are purposeful and develop children's skills, knowledge and understanding.

The changes in national assessments mean that results in 2016 cannot be compared with those from previous years. The assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2016 show that around three quarters of pupils attained the expected level for pupils of this age in reading and mathematics, but a lower proportion did so in writing. The results by the end of Year 6 were much less positive. This was in part because of significant disruption to teaching through staff absences that have affected the learning of

pupils in Years 5 and 6. Only just over half of pupils attained the expected standard in reading, which is below the national average. A higher proportion of pupils demonstrated that they could write at the expected standard for their age; their achievement was slightly below the national average. The most significant weakness was in mathematics, where less than half of pupils showed that they could calculate and solve problems at the expected standard. This proportion was well below the national average. The school needs to urgently review the quality of teaching in mathematics and leadership of this subject. Overall, less than a third of pupils attained the expected level by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics and so over two thirds of the pupils are unprepared for their secondary education.

The school's improvement plan is well structured and clearly identifies the actions that leaders are taking to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. It has not yet been revised to take into account current assessment information and other aspects preventing the school being judged as good. The responses from Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, for example, are very negative. There is no qualified special educational needs leader and the school's website does not meet the government's current requirements. On the website:

- there is no child protection policy
- the curriculum does not give enough detail about what is being taught in each subject to each year group
- the charging policy is from 2011 and out of date
- the school's offer for special educational needs does not detail staff qualifications and training
- there is no link to the Department for Education's performance tables
- there is no information about governors' terms of office, attendance, business interests, or about the types of governor they are and which committees they sit on.

Governors have a good knowledge about how well pupils are achieving across the school, the quality of teaching and of how well the school is progressing against the school's improvement plan. The governing body has increased its knowledge and expertise through attending local authority and other training and through appointing new governors with specialist skills. This increased knowledge and expertise has improved the governors' ability to ask questions and challenge leaders.

Senior leaders have provided training for teaching assistants and have revised how they are deployed. On my tour around the school with you it was clear that assistants were all busy working with pupils or working on useful activities set by teachers. This is an improvement from the previous inspection. They are included in more staff training and meetings and are now a full part of the systems to appraise the impact of their work.

The school's work to improve the effectiveness of teachers who lead subjects is starting to improve. They are being teamed up with subject leaders at other schools, have joined national subject associations to get expert advice and have received

training about their roles.

It is important the school's progress to July 2016 continues next term and that leaders' sights are not deflected away from tackling the areas for improvement identified by the previous inspection. Raising attainment in mathematics in key stage 2 is a priority, as is rebuilding staff confidence and morale.

External support

High-quality external support from, and arranged by, the local authority has helped to stabilise staffing and secure the leadership of the school at this important time. The local authority knows the serious situation the school may find itself in if the school is not judged to be good at its next inspection. No time can be lost by the new senior leaders starting in September 2016 and in Spring 2017 in rectifying the weaknesses identified by Ofsted at the previous inspection. The school is on a knife-edge in terms of the progress it is making, given the significant changes to senior leadership happening over the next year. Quick recruitment of a high-quality headteacher is essential. Local authority representatives have arranged for support from a national leader in education at Strike Lane Primary School and, according to school records, this has helped to improve the quality of teaching. Local authority support has also been successful in strengthening the effectiveness of governance and in helping the school with staffing issues.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the diocese of Lancaster, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr
Her Majesty's Inspector