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11 November 2016

Mr Rob Barraclough  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School  
Healds Road  
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West Yorkshire  
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Dear Mr Barraclough

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Dewsbury**

Following my visit to your school on 14 October 2016 with Kirsty Godfrey, Her Majesty's Inspector, 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 February 2016. 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- eliminate inconsistencies in pupils' learning and progress in key stage 2 for all groups, particularly the most able pupils, and in reading and writing, so that learning and progress are consistently good when set against their respective starting points
- increase the impact of strategies to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in order that they regain the lost ground in their learning caused by their prior underachievement

- increase the impact of strategies to stamp out the disruptive and defiant behaviour of a small minority of pupils which is leading to a disproportionately high number of behaviour incidents, and reduce the rate of persistent absence.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, discussions were held with you, the assistant headteacher, two members of the governing body, a local authority representative and the director of education from the Catholic Diocese of Leeds. I spoke to pupils, and scrutinised their work. I also examined documentation relating to the actions the school has taken to tackle the areas requiring improvement, attendance, behaviour, governance, assessment and pupil progress information. I observed teaching and learning in the school's seven classes, including the early years provision.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, three teachers have left the school and a member of staff is currently absent through illness. Two new teachers have been appointed to the Year 4 and Year 6 classes respectively. A supply teacher is covering the staff absence. A new chair and vice-chair of the governing body have been appointed.

## **Main findings**

Senior leaders are working tirelessly to improve the quality of education the school provides. This single-mindedness is having a positive effect on: pupils' learning and progress; the suitability of the curriculum; the quality and accuracy of assessment; and the robustness of monitoring procedures. The headteacher has been proactive and enlisted external support which is proving valuable. There is a greater degree of staff accountability and a more urgent approach to tackling shortcomings. A great many actions have been taken and various strategies employed. In a sense, these have laid a solid platform from which to launch the school's improvement journey. The challenge for leaders going forward will be to build on the momentum they have generated and translate all of this activity into concrete results. That is to say, clear evidence of good progress for all groups of pupils by the end of key stage 2, which is potentially the school's Achilles heel. There is evidence of continued impact in the early years and at key stage 1, but it will take a monumental effort for the current Year 6, who are a high needs group, to hit their targets.

Observations of teaching, scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's performance information indicate that teaching is having an increasingly positive impact on pupils' learning. A good learning climate has been cultivated with pupils mostly displaying positive attitudes to learning and staff generally providing pupils with engaging and relatively challenging work. Pupils have regular opportunities to write at length and there is more curriculum time dedicated to giving pupils opportunities to acquire, apply and begin to master their knowledge, skills and understanding in

English and mathematics across a range of subjects. However, you acknowledge that there needs to be an even greater impact from the strategies you are implementing in order to eliminate the remaining inconsistencies in teaching. For example, where staff do not always ensure that the most able pupils are given work that is not too easy. You also acknowledge that on occasion, the assessment of pupils' work and reinforcing the need for pupils to complete the deeper learning activities could be more robust. Poor-quality handwriting is not always challenged.

The provisional key stage 1 outcomes in 2016 are positive, with the school's results eclipsing the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Similarly, 96% of pupils met the expected standard in phonics decoding against a national average of 81%. At key stage 2, while the proportion of pupils achieving expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics compared favourably with national averages, the progress pupils' made from their respective starting points was not good in reading or writing. The school's latest performance information indicates that currently throughout the school there are inconsistent rates of progress being made by different groups of pupils such as the most able, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, minority ethnic heritage pupils and those deemed to be disadvantaged, especially in writing. The school accepts that while there is recent evidence of faster progress among these groups, there are still large gaps for them to make up to get to where they should be, when you consider their starting points and their potentials.

Provision in the early years continues to have a good impact on children's learning and development. This is helping to ensure that greater numbers of children are ready to confidently meet the challenges of the next stage of their learning when they transfer to Year 1. In 2016, from starting points that were generally below those typically seen nationally, 70% of children reached a good level of development.

Pupils' attendance dipped in 2016 and the rate of persistent absence has risen over time. You accept that the school needs to become more effective in improving the attendance of a small but hard-to-reach minority of pupils who are skewing your overall figures. The same is true of behaviour, with a small but stubborn minority of pupils accounting for the very large majority of incidents, particularly in key stage 2, who are not responding positively to the school's zero tolerance approach.

Members of the governing body are well qualified to track and influence the school's improvement and articulate that they do so robustly. Inspectors challenged them to provide evidence of their strategic challenge as it was not wholly apparent in the minutes of their meetings with the school's leaders. They do have a largely accurate view of the school's current effectiveness and remaining issues. They acknowledge that despite some more recent improvements in outcomes there is a long way to go before the school can present a compelling case that it provides a good quality of education overall. Not least, in ensuring that all groups of pupils make good or better progress in all subjects throughout the school relative to their starting points.

Until further notice, the school should email a termly progress report to me.

### **External support**

Regrettably, the local authority has not provided effective challenge and support to the school to improve over time. Consequently, the school has turned elsewhere for meaningful help and the headteacher has brokered a relationship with the executive headteacher of St Wilfrid's and St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic primary schools in Sheffield, who is a national leader of education. As a result, the school is receiving targeted support, advice and challenge which is helping to focus and accelerate its improvement. There are tangible indicators that this link is paying dividends, not least in rationalising curriculum, assessment and teaching arrangements and galvanising leadership capacity and efficiency. The Catholic Diocese of Leeds provides the school with a degree of external accountability by providing candid evaluations of the progress it is making in tackling the key issues it has.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Leeds, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kirklees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Young  
**Senior Her Majesty's Inspector**