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Neil Harris
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Dear Neil Harris

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

Following my visit to your school on 15 November 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 January 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in January 2016, 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:

- ensure that tasks are well matched to the learning needs and abilities of pupils so that their learning is embedded and deepened, and the rates of pupils' progress are accelerated.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school's improvement plan was

evaluated and a number of documents relating to the school's performance, the safeguarding of pupils and pupils' progress tracking information were reviewed. I visited all classrooms, where I spoke with pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.

Context

Since the last inspection, a deputy headteacher has been seconded to increase the capacity of the school's senior leadership team. The deputy headteacher is also a full-time class teacher. Currently, one job-share teacher is absent through maternity and her role is being covered by her job-share partner. Three governors have left the governing body and there have been two new appointments. However, there are still three vacancies on the governing body. The school has recruited a business manager following the retirement of one of the school's administration team.

Main findings

Senior leaders have acted quickly to respond to the findings of the school's last inspection. They have developed a very clear strategy for improving the school, prioritising their actions appropriately and monitoring these actions for impact. Leaders have become much more analytical when they review their actions to ensure that time is not wasted on unnecessary or ineffective initiatives and that successes are built upon. The school's written plans for improvement are realistic and very detailed, enabling leaders and governors to hold colleagues to account for their actions.

Senior leaders and governors have reviewed and renewed all of the school's policies. Leaders and governors are now much more aware of the wide range of statutory duties and responsibilities that lie with them. The school's newly employed business manager has introduced timetables and procedures to ensure that statutory documents are up to date and accurate.

Governors are more effective in seeking out information on the school's performance and using this information to challenge leaders. Governors have much higher expectations of each other, insisting that each is well prepared for every meeting and that each plays an active part in driving the school forward. They meet with senior and subject leaders regularly, and seek evidence to ensure that the information they are receiving on school improvement and pupils' performance is accurate.

The headteacher and governing body rightly identified that too much of the headteacher's time was being spent on administrative and managerial tasks. The introduction of both a business manager and a deputy headteacher has allowed the headteacher to focus more on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the start of the current academic year. As a consequence, there are now much clearer procedures for the monitoring and assessment of pupils' work.

Leaders review pupils' progress each half term, paying particular regard to groups of pupils who have underperformed in the past, such as boys and the most able pupils. Teachers record the progress of pupils in class action plans, identifying what has been done to support individual pupils and what future support is necessary to improve the pupils' outcomes further. Leaders hold regular meetings with teachers, checking the accuracy of the plans by talking to pupils about what they have learned and looking at samples of their work. Where pupils are underperforming, leaders ask challenging questions of teachers to ensure that any issues are addressed promptly.

In 2016, children made good progress from their starting points in the early years, exceeding the national figure for a good level of development for the third successive year. Pupils' achievement in the Year 1 phonics screening check shows a similar picture over the last three years. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, continue to achieve well by the end of key stage 1, particularly in reading and mathematics.

Pupils' progress at the end of key stage 2 was less strong in 2016, particularly in reading and mathematics, and you attribute this to a legacy of poor teaching in the past. Pupils' attainment, including that of disadvantaged pupils and boys, was significantly below average in reading and spelling and grammar, at both the expected and higher levels.

The school has prioritised reading this term and current internal assessment information shows that the majority of pupils across the school are making progress. Initiatives, such as a lunchtime reading club and discussions with pupils to gauge their interests, are helping to raise the engagement of boys in their learning and their achievement. Regular guided reading sessions and the impact of strong phonics teaching in the early years and key stage 1 are continuing to equip pupils with the reading skills necessary to achieve well as they progress through the school.

However, work in pupils' books suggests that rates of progress in reading and writing, in particular, vary considerably. The learning tasks set by teachers are not consistently well matched to pupils' abilities because their assessment of what pupils can already do is not accurate enough. As a result, some pupils are not making enough progress because they are not challenged enough, while others find the work too difficult. This is also inhibiting pupils from deepening and embedding their learning as well as they should.

External support

The school has received good support from the local authority which brokered an effective link with another local school. This partnership has proved very productive, enabling the headteacher to introduce improvements that were previously found to be successful for a school in a similar setting and period of improvement. This

partnership is expected to continue for the foreseeable future to ensure that the improvements already seen are embedded and built upon between now and the school's next inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen McMullan
Her Majesty's Inspector