

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Jill Allen
St Wilfrid's Catholic Primary School
Church Lane
Ripon
North Yorkshire
HG4 2ES

Dear Mrs Allen

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

Following my visit to your school on 18 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 April 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 April 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 recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- sharpen improvement plans so that they more specifically identify the difference actions will make to pupils' learning
- improve checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that they more precisely identify the difference teaching makes to what pupils learn.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your deputy headteacher, the English subject leader and four members of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also had discussions with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese. We visited two classrooms together to observe pupils' learning and we looked at a range of pupils' workbooks.

I examined the school improvement plan and other documents, including notes of visits from external professionals, leaders' records of checks on the quality of teaching and anonymised teachers' performance management information. I also looked at information about pupils' achievements and attendance.

Context

Since the last inspection, a new deputy headteacher and another teacher have been appointed, both of whom are teaching in the lower school. A new governor has joined the governing body.

Main findings

You, other staff and governors accept the judgements made at the last inspection. You make no excuses, recognising that pupils' outcomes are not good enough in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2. Many pupils have a long way to catch up because of the legacy of weaker teaching. Stronger teaching is now helping pupils to make faster progress.

The school improvement plan clearly identifies appropriate actions. Milestones for improvement allow leaders and governors to keep pace with the ambitious list of actions. However, the plan concentrates too much on what leaders and teachers will do, at the expense of checking that actions are making a difference to pupils' learning.

You have introduced an extensive programme of checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Along with other leaders and external professionals, you are keeping up with this demanding schedule. This programme needs more closely aligning with the school improvement plan so that these checks shine a brighter light on the most important priorities. You would benefit from concentrating on fewer things in greater depth. During these checks, leaders mainly concentrate on making sure that teachers are doing what has been agreed. Leaders now need to shine a brighter light on the difference teaching makes to the learning of identified pupils. Leaders need to follow up more systematically to see that the learning of these pupils does in fact improve at a fast enough rate.

Teaching is better in key stage 1 and in Year 3 than it was last year, partly because you have successfully appointed new, stronger teachers to these classes. Pupils' workbooks show evidence of raised expectations. Pupils are writing more often and at greater length so are developing more staying power. They are also writing with increasing accuracy as teachers expect them to apply what they know. However, although teachers tell pupils what needs to improve, they do not systematically check that pupils are acting on this. In mathematics, teachers are providing more opportunities for pupils to attempt to solve mathematical problems. This now needs to be a more routine feature of lessons for pupils of all abilities. In particular, teachers need to give the most able pupils work that is even more challenging.

Teachers are giving pupils more opportunities to practise and apply their writing skills in other subjects such as science and religious education. This is an

improvement on the previous position. However, teachers do not always demand the same quality of writing in these subjects as pupils achieve in English lessons. Teachers have yet to begin to provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their mathematics skills in other subjects.

You have reviewed and tightened attendance procedures and are keeping a close eye on the few pupils whose attendance has fallen below 90%. Consequently, attendance has improved for all groups of pupils and is overall above the national average.

Governors continue to use their range of skills and experience to hold you and other leaders to account. The governing body, assisted by representatives from the local authority and diocese, is offering increasingly stronger challenge through regular meetings of a joint review group. The clearer information you provide is helping them to ask the right questions.

External support

The local authority and the local Catholic diocese have increased the amount of support and challenge since the school was judged to require improvement for a second time. They are making regular checks on progress. The local authority needs to be clear not just about what external professionals will do but the precise improvements that are expected as a result of their work. A national leader of education has helped you to improve record-keeping and some essential systems and processes, such as the way you present assessment information. She has helped you to identify many areas for development and makes clear recommendations.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the diocese of Leeds and the director of children's services for North Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Philip Riozzi
Her Majesty's Inspector