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Mr Simon Stockdale
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Stockdale

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Our Lady and St Brendan's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9 December 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in July 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not 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, when checking the quality of teaching, that more emphasis is given to the impact teaching is having on learning
- analyse assessment information more thoroughly to identify which pupil groups are doing well and which are doing less well across subjects
- make use of this analysis to sharpen improvement plans and inform checks on pupils' learning and progress.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and the English subject leader to discuss the actions you have taken since the last inspection. I also held a joint meeting with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese, and a meeting with three members of the governing body. You, your deputy headteacher and I visited a number of lessons together to observe pupils' learning and to look in pupils' workbooks. I examined the school improvement plan and other documents, including leaders' monitoring notes, notes of visits from external partners and minutes of governing body meetings. I looked at school assessment information.

Context

Since my last visit, just over a year ago, there has been some turbulence in staffing, necessitating some use of temporary teachers. In addition, two teachers have left the school and three have joined, including a senior leader and a newly qualified teacher.

Main findings

Leaders' actions since the last inspection have resulted in very little improvement. The 'green shoots of recovery' you described to me are not evident in pupils' work. The progress of too many key stage 2 pupils is still not good enough.

You have revised the school improvement plan to take account of the recommendations I made following my last visit, as well as the concerns the local authority has expressed. The plan identifies the most important priorities and appropriate actions. However, it has similar weaknesses to the plan in place at the time of my last visit. In particular, it does not give enough attention to the difference actions should make to pupils' learning.

You record information about the progress of each pupil but leaders do not make effective use of this information to identify where groups of pupils are doing well and less well. Consequently, your plans, and the targets you set for teachers, do not identify which pupil groups you need to prioritise and in which subjects.

You and other leaders are more regularly checking the quality of teaching. However, there is still too little rigour in this work. As was the case last time I visited, these checks do not shine a bright enough light on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress. The guidance leaders give to teachers is not precise enough. Furthermore, leaders are not following up systematically to make sure teachers act on the advice or to check that it is making a difference to pupils' learning. As a result, teaching is not improving quickly enough.

The school still does not have a coherent, consistent approach to teaching writing.

As a result, the writing of too many pupils in key stage 2, including the most able, is poorly developed. As at the time of the last inspection, teachers do not address basic errors such as inconsistencies in verb tense or missing punctuation, so pupils continue to replicate these mistakes. Consequently, too many pupils are working below the expected standards, including in the current Year 6 class. However, teachers' knowledge of how to help pupils construct sentences that are more interesting is improving. As a result, this aspect of pupils' writing is beginning to show signs of improvement. Pupils' handwriting has improved and most pupils in upper key stage 2 are now writing in a fluent, cursive script.

Over the last year, governance has been ineffective. The governing body has not held you and other leaders properly to account. The appointment of a new chair of governors in September, along with the addition to the governing body of a former headteacher, and some effective training, has resulted in a recent but rapid improvement in governance. Through 'scrutiny committee' meetings, governors are now asking challenging questions and acting with greater urgency. The local authority and the diocese have been instrumental in these improvements and representatives of both sit on this committee. It is too early to see the impact of this work.

External support

Over the last year, the local authority and Catholic diocese have provided much support and challenge, but leaders have failed to make the best use of this. The local authority issued the school with a formal warning notice in July 2016 following concerns about the low standards of performance of pupils. Since this time, the local authority and diocese have redoubled their efforts. Representatives from both the local authority and diocese are rigorously checking, through scrutiny committee meetings and other methods, to see that the support makes a difference to the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.

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 Bradford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Philip Riozzi

Her Majesty's Inspector