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Ms Tamsyn Lawlor
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Lawlor

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Joseph's RC Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 27 March 2017, 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.

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.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other leaders and representatives of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I looked at a range of pupils' work and talked to pupils during my visit to classrooms with senior leaders. I looked at records of leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, and information kept about assessments of pupils' achievements. I looked at the checks made on the suitability of staff and sampled a range of written records of governors' work. I scrutinised the report on the external review of the pupil premium.

Context

Since the last inspection, an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium has been completed. You have further developed links with other local schools to support your plans for improvement. Your deputy headteacher is on maternity leave and your assistant headteacher has stepped up to act in this role.

Main findings

Your plans for improvement focus sharply on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. They provide timely measures of success. These are suitable for leaders and governors to check on the progress being made towards becoming a good school. Your external review of the pupil premium was completed promptly. Leaders and governors can explain the impact of your pursuit of its recommendations.

Teachers are using the more accessible and transparent information you now have about pupils' progress to plan more effective lessons and ensure that pupils are more knowledgeable about their progress. You have taken steps to improve the information parents receive about their children's achievements. The 'flightpath documents' you now share help everyone understand how well pupils are doing.

Your actions to improve the quality of teaching are developing a greater consistency in rates of progress of pupils between classes, subjects and year groups. The more skilful use teachers make of information as a result of further training are beginning to diminish differences in the progress of groups where these remain. For example, you have recognised that the progress of boys and girls differs in some year groups. The work I saw in pupils' books demonstrates that your checks on pupils' learning are accurate. For example, it is clear that least able pupils are making more rapid progress in improving their spelling and punctuation.

You have done much to improve pupils' attitudes to their learning. They write at greater length and can sustain the consistent use of skills they learn in these longer pieces of writing. The lessons I visited showed that pupils become immersed in their learning and are growing in confidence when talking about the work. For example, pupils in several classes were able to explain how they had arrived at an answer to a calculation in their mathematics work. Your work to focus on developing mastery in mathematics and the development of reasoning skills is paying off.

Disadvantaged pupils have become capable of using a wider range of vocabulary in their writing. This follows on from actions as a result of a recommendation from the external review of the pupil premium. 'Magpie books' are helping pupils remember and build up a bank of ideas and words to use in their writing. You have also ensured that effective training has been provided to support staff as well as teachers. They are at the forefront of your work to provide additional interventions for disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders monitor the impact of teaching on outcomes for pupils more thoroughly and systematically. They pick up variations in pupils' progress promptly. They act swiftly to arrange additional support for pupils who are showing signs of progress slowing down. Your use of the pupil premium is becoming more effective as a result of this careful monitoring. Any interventions which are not working well are promptly reconsidered. The most effective actions are extended and continued.

Records of your analysis of pupils' achievement show that you carefully consider the progress of different groups. For example, you have recognised the need to focus on improving the proportion of pupils who are most-able writers. However, your checks do not focus as sharply on the variations in strengths and weaknesses of teachers' skills. As a result, middle leaders and governors were not able to talk to me as authoritatively about this.

You have made sure that middle leaders are given a wider range of opportunities to develop their leadership skills. As a result, they are playing a more significant part in driving improvement further. They are having a positive impact on exemplifying good practice for other teachers to learn from. They contribute well to the information governors receive about how well the school is progressing.

Governors have taken steps to improve the effectiveness of the questions they ask to challenge you. They talked positively with me about improvements to the openness and transparency of the culture within which they can ask difficult questions and pursue lines of enquiry. They understand the information you provide about the progress of pupils. They have ensured that the recommendations arising from the review of the pupil premium expenditure have been acted on promptly and are showing early signs of positive impact.

External support

You have made sure that opportunities have arisen to work with other local schools. As a result, teachers and governors are more ambitious for what can be achieved. They have a more secure understanding of what good teaching looks like. Your external review of the pupil premium has been used well to ensure that differences in outcomes for these pupils are beginning to diminish more rapidly and additional support is used more effectively.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education

for the Archdiocese of Southwark, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Croydon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wright
Her Majesty's Inspector