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Mrs M McGuire  
St Cuthbert's RC Primary School  
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Dear Mrs McGuire

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Cuthbert's RC Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 28 June 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 July 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 July and 2016, the school was also judged to require improvement.

School 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.

Leaders should take further action to ensure that teachers, when planning learning activities for their pupils, take more account of:

- what their pupils already know, can do and understand
- barriers that some pupils have to their learning.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Working with the headteacher, the inspector visited all classes and reviewed a sample of pupils' work.

## **Context**

The headteacher in post at the last inspection resigned his position in April 2017 and you then became the executive headteacher of St Cuthbert's. This has been one of many changes to staff over the last 30 months.

## **Main findings**

The improvements the school had been experiencing halted after the last inspection. A lack of strong and decisive leadership resulted in the leadership team becoming fractured and frustrated. In the two terms that followed the inspection little improvement was achieved. Since your appointment, you have made remarkable progress in establishing what needs to be done to ensure that this school will improve.

You have been able to achieve such rapid improvement partly with the support and encouragement of the governors of St Mary's School in Levenshulme. They enabled an adjustment to your role so that you are now temporary executive headteacher of both St Mary's and St Cuthbert's.

You quickly galvanised the leadership team at St Cuthbert's and, with the help of key staff from St Mary's, rapidly established an accurate evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of this school and a plan for sustained and substantial improvement. You and your team have made an excellent start in reorganising the school, giving clear direction to teachers and teaching assistants, raising everyone's expectations and demonstrating how the quality of teaching can improve significantly and rapidly.

You have restructured the leadership team and altered their responsibilities. The appointment of a senior leader with responsibility for mathematics is already paying dividends. Pupils' learning in mathematics is improving and their progress accelerating.

You have introduced a rigorous system to evaluate the quality of teaching throughout the school. This involves senior leaders analysing the quality of pupils' work and their improvement. Teachers are also observed teaching. You have set high expectations for teachers and they now receive challenging targets based on pupils' outcomes. You have organised groups of staff across both schools to support improvements in teaching.

You are, with the help of teachers from St Mary's, improving the accuracy with which teachers assess pupils' work. You recognise the need to review the school's policy on marking work and giving pupils' feedback. These weaknesses in assessment make it difficult for teachers to plan precisely work that meets their pupils' needs.

The systems that allow the whole school to monitor how well pupils are progressing have improved. These are now streamlined and give important information. You are training staff how to best analyse and use this information to identify what further learning needs to take place.

You have started to reorganise the additional support that particular pupils receive. You realise that some pupils' needs are not being met as well as they could be. Teachers do not plan well for some pupils because they are not well informed about what these pupils need to help them learn more quickly.

Already, you have tightened up systems to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality. This is resulting in reduced absences and almost all pupils being ready to start learning at 9 o'clock.

You are beginning to address the need to broaden the curriculum taught across the school. You arranged for a review of the science curriculum, and already that has improved science for Year 2 pupils.

Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and where teaching is good, pupils engage with enthusiasm. There are early signs that they are taking more care when presenting their work and are quickly developing skills in working with and supporting each other.

The classroom environment is improving throughout the school. Classrooms are now much more stimulating and exciting. You recognise that other parts of the school, such as the corridors, also need improvement.

Examining the work that pupils have produced recently and comparing it with earlier work confirms that there are early signs of improving teaching. It is clear that teachers are both capable of improving their work and are keen to do so.

You recognised that there were a number of strengths in the school when you took over. Relationships between the school and parents were strong. There was a strong school ethos, firmly rooted in the spiritual development of the pupils. You are managing to retain these qualities, while making other improvements.

At the last inspection, governors were asked to review the impact of additional funding the school receives for disadvantaged pupils. This review did not take place until January 2017. Progress in addressing specific actions described in the resulting report has been slow. However, there are improvements throughout the school that are having a benefit to disadvantaged pupils. The more-detailed monitoring of what pupils have learned successfully and have not learned well enough are helping teachers to provide more-specific support to disadvantaged pupils.

Governors are well equipped to make a significant contribution to leading this school. They quickly identified the need to intervene to halt the decline in the

quality of leadership which was preventing more-rapid school improvement. They provide you with high-quality support while also being able to hold you to account for the quality of your work.

Above all, in a very limited time, you have stopped the decline in this school's standards. You have raised expectations of what pupils can achieve. You have given staff the confidence and support that they will need to provide St Cuthbert's pupils with a good education.

### **External support**

The local authority offered good support to the school throughout a very difficult time. It was instrumental in brokering your adjusted position in your current school, which has enabled you to drive improvement in St Cuthbert's. Although it is early days, staff from St Mary's are providing excellent support and guidance to the staff at this school.

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

Yours sincerely

Neil Mackenzie  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**