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Denise Fannin
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Dear Mrs Fannin

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of St Pius X RC Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 12 July 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in March 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the interim head of school, the executive headteacher, the chair of the governing body, and the national leader of education (NLE) who has provided support previously. A telephone interview with a representative of the local authority was also held. I met with a group of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils and with members of your senior leadership team. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

Since the previous section 5 inspection, there have been five changes to key teaching personnel across the school, including in the early years foundation stage. Teachers were initially supported effectively through the work of an NLE and two other specialist leaders of education (SLEs), although this has reduced over time. There have been changes on the governing body although the chair of governors has remained in post. There is currently one vacancy on the governing body. Your position as the interim head of school has been continued to enable you to work closely with the current executive headteacher. However, his allocation of time

spent in school has been reduced over that time. Other key leadership roles have been developed, including those of the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and mathematics subject leader. There are now three additional members on the senior leadership team.

From September 2017, the diocese is introducing a new executive headteacher on an interim basis.

The school has been issued with an academy order. However, this has not yet been successfully actioned in leading to conversion as part of a sponsor-led academy.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You have been described as the 'constant' in a time of continuing change and uncertainty for the school. Together with the executive headteacher you have guided the school to ensure that key changes are now having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning, as well as pupils' behaviour. This has been supported by the challenge of governors. You are taking effective action to improve the culture of the school so that pupils are now taking more pride in their school and value their learning. Pupils recognise ongoing improvements and say that they feel happy and safe.

You and your leaders now identify pupils who are at risk of not making sufficient progress and use this information to hold challenging conversations with teachers. This information is also used to increase accountability by informing teachers' performance management. As a result, targeted pupils are receiving additional support and interventions to help them catch up. However, as we discussed during my visit, teaching is still not leading to consistently good progress in all classes, especially where teachers are not making effective use of assessment information. Pupil progress meetings do not provide an opportunity to intervene soon enough when pupils are not making enough progress.

You ensure that there is a full range of useful monitoring and evaluation actions in place to check the quality of teaching. Subject leaders use observations and workbook scrutiny to gain a secure first-hand knowledge and understanding of the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. Together with input from SLEs and the NLE, this has also led to leaders prioritising the right aspects for development, such as reasoning in mathematics.

External support has been well used, although the work through the national support school has diminished over time. This reduction has led to an effective layer of support being taken away, which has slowed the rate of progress in some core areas of the school's work. External support from the local authority adviser has been helpful in guiding and challenging the thinking of leaders through regular progress reviews. Most notably, the early years foundation stage has received high-quality input which has had a transformational effect in working with the recently

appointed Reception class teacher. Children's outcomes have improved tremendously from low starting points. However, as we discussed during the visit, your monitoring does not focus sufficiently on groups of pupils or individuals who need to catch up most urgently. You focus more on teachers' actions and compliance, rather than learners' outcomes. This means that there are still too many pupils across the school who are progressing too slowly in reading, writing and mathematics. It is therefore a priority for you, your leaders and governors to strengthen your focus on pupil progress.

Following the previous inspection, the governing body commissioned the local authority, in September 2016, to undertake a review of the spending of the school's pupil premium grant. This has been helpful in enabling the governing body to consider the importance and impact of the grant. As a result, further checks, reports and updates are routinely given so that governors now have a clear understanding of how the grant is allocated and its impact. For example, governors are now starting to probe and ask questions of the progress of particular groups. However, governors recognise that they need to focus even more carefully on key groups, such as the most able disadvantaged pupils, to improve their outcomes.

Governors remain fully committed, supportive and challenging. Together with the chair of governors, you respond to advice and are keen to ensure that the school takes any appropriate action required to improve. Governors check the work of the school, including, for example, ensuring that the school meets safeguarding requirements and that the single central record is up to date. In this way, governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Moving forward from September 2017, governors' decisions are ensuring that the school is in a stronger position to continue to improve teaching. A core of middle leaders is now showing the capacity to accelerate the school's improvement. This is evident through the significant improvement in outcomes. The outcomes in the early years foundation stage, as well as key stage 1 results in 2017 in reading, writing and mathematics, have significantly improved. Results in the Year 1 phonics screening check have also been sustained. However, leaders are aware that disappointing results in the Year 6 national tests in 2017 show that raising attainment quickly for pupils remains an urgent priority as there is still a 'legacy' of underachievement.

During my visit, you expressed frustration at the lack of certainty around leadership arrangements for the future. This included your own interim post and the repeated short-term, part-time interim roles of the executive headteacher. This instability lowers morale and is reducing the capacity that you, your governors and other leaders have to be able to plan confidently for the longer-term success of the school.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made.

Leaders and managers are taking effective actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation. However, we discussed the urgency required to

ensure that those who need to catch up do so quickly in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school's improvement action plan is fit for purpose but needs immediate updating to be ready for the new term commencing September 2017.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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

Yours sincerely

Stewart Gale
Her Majesty's Inspector