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Mrs M Gavin
Our Lady and St Paul's Roman Catholic Primary School, Heywood
Sutherland Road
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Dear Mrs Gavin

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Our Lady and St Paul's Roman Catholic Primary School, Heywood

Following my visit to your school on 19 April 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring 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 monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that plans produced by subject leaders include measurable outcomes so that leaders and governors can assess the effectiveness of actions to improve teaching and learning
- ensure that tasks provided for the most able pupils present consistent challenge to allow them to make accelerated progress across all key stages
- further develop existing behaviour systems to ensure that pupils take more ownership of their behaviour and more responsibility for their own learning.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection.

I met with two members of the governing body and three middle leaders. I also met with a representative from the local authority and spoke on the phone to a representative from the diocese. I spoke with a group of Year 5 and 6 pupils to gain their views on the school. I undertook a tour of the classrooms to observe pupils at work. I looked at pupils' workbooks and displays of work around the school. I also evaluated the school's improvement plan, records relating to pupils' achievement and your checks on the quality of teaching, and looked at the minutes from governing body meetings. I considered the school's most recent pupil performance data.

Context

Since the last inspection, there has been instability in staffing and governance. This has now been addressed. Staff and governors, supported by the local authority, have created a new mission statement, revising the school's vision and values. This ensures a consistent approach and has helped stakeholders to reach a common understanding of the school's purpose.

Main findings

Leaders have responded decisively following the previous inspection. Together with governors, the diocese and the local authority, leaders produced an action plan to tackle the weaknesses found. This plan is well structured, with suitable timescales and indications of what success will look like. Leaders and governors know the strengths of the school and are taking action to remedy weaknesses. An external review of governance was requested by governors. As a result of the review, governors are in a much stronger position to hold leaders to account for the effective leadership of the school.

Minutes of governing body meetings show that leaders provide detailed information and that governors challenge this information with effective questions. In this way, the governing body ensures that new strategies are carefully planned and implemented. Governors' challenge ensures that leaders are held to account for the effectiveness of new strategies.

There is now a very clear vision for improvement, which is shared by all staff. Staff told me that they now work hard as a team to do what is best for the pupils. They recognise that there have been significant improvements in team work. They appreciate the training they have received and understand how this has had a positive impact on pupils' learning in the classroom.

Pupils are very positive about school. They recognise that there have been many changes for the better, especially concerning their learning. One comment summed up the positive views: 'Our headteacher is good at keeping morale high. She smiles a lot and respects children, as we respect her and other staff.'

You were asked to develop the skills of new middle leaders so that they can monitor their areas of responsibility effectively and improve the quality of teaching. You make sure that middle leaders have the time, skills and opportunities they need to review the work of staff. This means that there is a shared purpose in the development of teaching and learning throughout the school. Middle leaders are beginning to undertake monitoring activities such as work reviews and observations. However, it is still senior leaders who evaluate the impact of activities based on assessment data. You are aware of the need to develop the analysis of data by subject leaders to enable them to have an accurate picture of progress from which to develop more precise plans for further improvement. Middle leaders' action plans currently lack measurable outcomes, which limits leaders and governors in assessing the effectiveness of actions to improve teaching and learning.

You were also asked to ensure that staff consistently apply the new behaviour policy so that the pupils' behaviour and self-discipline is good. You are raising expectations of behaviour through re-establishing the school's behaviour policies. You have also revised systems at playtimes and lunchtimes to improve experiences for pupils. As a result, pupils' behaviour around school and in the playground is much improved. Staff are now consistent in their approach to behaviour. Pupils consider that they are treated fairly. They told me that behaviour has improved because there are clear rules in place. This is also a result of the new behaviour system with rewards, and the impact of adults modelling positive behaviour around the school. Pupils have an improved attitude to learning. However, leaders and governors recognise that there is more to do regarding behaviour and pupils taking responsibility for their own learning. Despite the improvements made, some pupils are too reliant on adult support to manage their own behaviour and learning.

Another area for improvement was to make sure that tasks within lessons are better shaped to meet the needs of all pupils. You use expertise from a teaching school alongside the strong practice within the school to improve provision. Leaders have secured greater accuracy in the assessment of pupils' work, through moderation activities with other schools. You are using your assessment system to track more precisely the progress of each cohort. This is allowing teachers to make adaptations to planning so that tasks are matched to individual and group needs. The standard of work in pupils' books, in a wide range of subjects, confirms that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving.

You have also raised teachers' expectations of what pupils can do. Support from other schools has resulted in higher expectations across the school. Staff use questioning to develop pupils' learning, such as in a Year 6 mathematics lesson where pupils had to work hard to solve complex problems on area. Achievement

meetings are giving teachers and other staff increased awareness of year-group expectations and whether there are any gaps in pupils' learning. As a result, work in lessons and in books demonstrates that the most able pupils and middle-ability pupils are currently making stronger progress in their learning. However, teaching does not provide consistent challenge for the most able pupils. This means that this group do not make enough progress for them to make up lost ground due to weaker teaching in the past.

You were asked to improve the presentation and quality of pupils' writing. Work scrutiny and observations in lessons show that pupils' handwriting is consistent across the school and presentation is improving. This is having a positive impact on the quality of pupils' writing. Your own assessment information and the progress we observed in pupils' books over time in relation to pupils' understanding and use of punctuation, vocabulary and spelling show that there is a consistent approach to the teaching of writing, which is linked to reading. As a result of these changes, the proportion of pupils who achieve the standards expected for their age in writing is increasing across the school.

Teachers are also applying the school's approach to the teaching of reading consistently. In key stage 1 and early years, teachers provide frequent practice of reading sounds throughout the day. The teaching of reading is also more consistent across the school. Leaders have introduced more opportunities for the development of comprehension and inference skills through guided reading. This has resulted in more pupils making stronger progress from their starting points. Leaders are taking some successful steps to begin to increase pupils' positive attitudes to reading. Teachers take opportunities to read high-quality, enjoyable books to pupils of all ages. Pupils are therefore beginning to cultivate pleasure in reading.

External support

The local authority officer knows the school well and regularly reviews the progress of the school, offering appropriate support. This had an impact in further improving governance through effective training. Regular meetings with a local authority representative are helpful in identifying appropriate next steps and ensuring that you are receiving the right guidance at the right time. The diocese has acted quickly in organising support from a teaching school, which has helped middle leaders to develop the skills they need to carry out their roles more effectively. You have used this external support to make sure that the school receives guidance and training in the most pressing areas.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Hunter

Her Majesty's Inspector