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Ms Alison Pickin
St Peter's Catholic Primary School
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Dear Ms Pickin

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Peter's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 25 April 2018, 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 January 2017. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in January 2017, the school was also judged to require improvement.

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 teachers provide a consistent level of challenge in writing for the most able pupils
- extend leadership capacity by enabling teachers to take more responsibility for leading the curriculum, particularly in relation to the foundation subjects.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, two assistant headteachers, pupils, governors and three representatives of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school's self-evaluation form

and school improvement plan were evaluated, and a series of short visits were made to all classes. A wide range of pupils' books were reviewed, including writing, mathematics and homework books.

Context

Since the inspection in January 2017, four teachers have left the school. Two newly qualified teachers joined the school in September 2017. The governing body is currently in the process of recruiting one more teacher.

Main findings

Since the last inspection, you have focused the minds of staff, and channelled their energies into improving outcomes for all pupils. You have set a clear direction of travel and enabled the hard-working staff team to move a considerable way along the journey of school improvement. Working closely with governors, you have taken decisive action to address the issues that were identified at the previous inspection.

You and other senior leaders have produced a self-evaluation document which provides the necessary information to help governors accurately chart and evaluate the school's progress. Leaders have identified, appropriately, the most important aspects of the school's provision to improve and produced well-focused plans. Leaders implement these plans effectively and routinely measure the impact of their actions against clear success criteria. However, you recognise that there is a need to develop teachers' leadership skills, so they can take greater responsibility for leading different aspects of the curriculum.

Governors are knowledgeable about how the school functions and performs. The governing body benefits from having several members with educational expertise. Their skills are used to good effect, and have brought about greater levels of challenge and support. Governors have a much better understanding of the school's priorities. Their work actively contributes to sustaining the momentum of school improvement. You and governors have tightened recruitment processes in an effort to appoint the high-calibre teachers that all pupils deserve.

Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning because of frequent checks on the quality of teaching through learning walks, analysis of assessment information and work in pupils' books. Regular discussions with teachers about pupils' progress enable leaders to draw conclusions about how different groups are performing. Leaders use this information well to plan next steps and deal with any emerging issues. This includes acting quickly to ensure that any gaps in staff knowledge are addressed. Teachers benefit from coaching by more experienced colleagues and learn well from each other.

Leaders' concerted efforts to improve the quality of teaching have paid off. The quality of teaching is improving because teachers have a much better understanding

of what constitutes good learning. Leaders use information from their monitoring of teaching to bring about positive changes in practice through bespoke support. Generally, teachers use assessment information more effectively to plan learning tasks that are better matched to the ability of pupils. This has been most successful in mathematics, where more challenge is evident in pupils' books.

As a result of effective professional development, teachers have been more successful in developing pupils' mathematical reasoning skills. Work in books shows that pupils are using their reasoning skills with increasing confidence. Most teachers regularly pose questions such as 'Do you agree?' and 'Explain why' that encourage pupils to think more deeply. Pupils use resources effectively and use visual strategies, such as 'the bar model' to support their mathematical understanding. This enables them to solve problems with greater confidence. Teachers' initial focus on ensuring pupils' mathematical fluency is laying the foundation for a secure understanding of more challenging concepts that they are likely to experience later.

You have taken a range of actions to improve learning opportunities for the most able pupils. The result of this work has been particularly successful in mathematics and reading. Consequently, teachers are better at providing suitable work which stretches the most able pupils. However, occasionally, the challenge presented for some of the least able pupils is too great and hinders them from making good progress. During lessons, teachers are now more likely to ask questions which require pupils to think harder. This is helping to deepen pupils' understanding.

You acknowledge that there is still further work to do to ensure that the most able pupils progress as well in writing as they do in mathematics. Despite pupils' positive attitudes to writing, there are fewer opportunities for them to edit and improve their written work. Other aspects of their writing such as grammar, punctuation and spelling are stronger, although handwriting is variable. Leaders have identified that the tracking of pupils' progress in writing is not working as well as it needs to. Leaders have already put in place plans to address this issue, although it is too early to see the impact of this work.

Pupils speak positively about the homework they receive. Teachers regularly set homework which is planned either to consolidate learning that has already taken place in school, or encourage research linked to their topic work. Consequently, homework is purposeful and contributes well to effective learning. For example, some pupils in Year 6 extended their understanding of the Vikings when they completed a homework task on weaponry and armour to support them with their history topic work.

Leaders' work is, without doubt, strongly contributing to improving pupils' outcomes. There was a sharp rise in achievement in 2017 in both key stages 1 and 2 compared with 2016 results. The proportion of pupils attaining at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics also increased substantially in 2017. However, there remain some differences between boys' and girls' achievement in a

few year groups, with boys generally performing less well in writing. However, this is not a surprise to leaders, and plans are already in place to try to raise the achievement of boys.

External support

Since the previous inspection, the local authority, through a commissioned partner, has provided a wide range of effective support through various teaching school alliances. You and other staff take heed of the guidance and advice offered, and act on it promptly. Staff value this support. The local authority has an accurate view of the school's performance because it monitors its progress closely. Both the diocese and local authority representatives acknowledge your willingness and openness to support, which has been fully embraced.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Hill

Her Majesty's Inspector